THE PRESENT STATE OF OLD ENGLISH FURNITURE

R. W. SYMONDS

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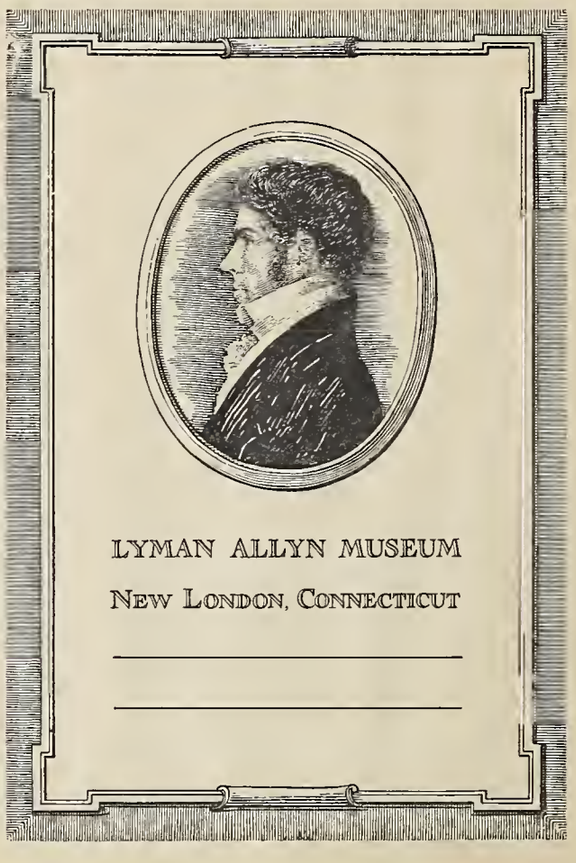

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THE PRESENT STATE OF OLD ENGLISH FURNITURE

A walnut Armchair surmounted by carved and gilt eagle; arms terminating in lion heads; splat and rails of back overlaid with burr walnut veneer. (Height 6 ft. 9 in.)

Circa 1725.

Fig. 1. Col. C.

THE PRESENT STATE
OF
OLD ENGLISH FURNITURE

BY

R. W. SYMONDS

WITH 116 ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE

WHEN the Author first became interested in Old English furniture he found that the various books on the subject, though excellent from an historical point of view, were of no real assistance to him either for determining the desirable pieces to buy or for the recognition of genuine "untouched" examples; and the essential knowledge he so much required he had to obtain solely by practical experience. The difficulties which the Author encountered at the outset will be experienced, doubtless, by many others in seeking that understanding of Old English furniture which is all-important to those desirous of purchasing only genuine examples worthy of appreciation and acquisition.

This book is the outcome, therefore, of a desire to help the collector by pointing out the lines along which the Author worked and which have led him to the conclusions presented in these pages, so that the amateur may begin his career as a collector with a certain knowledge which the author ventures to think could otherwise only be obtained by long experience.

The Author wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to all those who have so kindly permitted the illustration of pieces of furniture from their collections, and especially to Mr. Percival D. Griffiths, who has been more than generous in this respect. His thanks are also due to Mr. J. de Haan, for some valuable information concerning recipes used by the imitator; to Mr. Cooper of Messrs. Cooper & Humphries, for his care and skill in photographing most of the examples illustrated; and, finally, to Mr. J. H. Elder-Duncan and Mr. J. Chichele Plowden, for their suggestions during the compilation and revision of the manuscript.

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The following are the Names of the Owners from whose Collections have been taken the Examples illustrated :

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V.	Mrs. T. D. Wilson.

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THE PRESENT STATE OF OLD ENGLISH FURNITURE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries saw English domestic furniture attain its highest level of achievement and artistic development. It is, therefore, of pieces made during these three hundred years, from 1500 to 1800, that the collector should seek to acquire genuine and "untouched" examples. Furniture of an earlier date than 1500 he is not likely to meet with, and by 1800 the standard of design had begun to decline, although certain of the late eighteenth century designs continued into the nineteenth century, and, along with English Empire furniture, may be included as worthy of consideration.

Only within the last twenty-five to thirty years has the furniture of our forefathers received the attention and appreciation due to its merits. Yet its comparatively recent study has already produced an extensive literature, chiefly in the form of historical and chronological surveys, reviews of the progress of design, and theoretical treatises assigning certain styles or examples to particular craftsmen or designers, whose names are better known than their definite influence and activities. Details of the lives of the old cabinetmakers and designers, which would have been helpful in determining their individual merit and influence, are very scanty or entirely lacking; and, unfortunately, their contemporaries in literature are strangely silent concerning them and their works. In the absence of definite data, therefore, it is not surprising that modern writers are often ruled by personal predilection when discussing the old designers; and, in consequence, some craftsmen have been accorded a status and influence in regard to the furniture

of their time that, in the light of the latest researches, appears misplaced or open to question.

In a guide to the collector, such as this book aspires to be, controversy as to the exact influence of this or that designer or cabinetmaker is of less moment, however, than the consideration of the old furniture *as it exists and appears to-day*; and in furtherance of this belief an attempt has been made in the following pages to assist the collector in forming his judgment on pieces he may come across, and to show him how, by training his powers of observation and deduction, he should be able to discern important qualities and features in order to arrive at a just assessment of their artistic and material value. For, in the final test of purchasing, he must depend, not on the printed page or on labels affixed by others, but on his own critical faculties.

In a brief survey of the general characteristics of old English furniture as it is to-day, it may be helpful to consider, first, what is implied by the terms "genuine" and "untouched," advanced in the first paragraph as qualifications of the pieces which the collector should seek to acquire. To show the significance of these terms it is necessary to put forward three governing factors, applicable to all old furniture, in the following order :

A. Colour and surface condition of the wood.
B. Design, proportion, and ornamentation.
C. Quality of workmanship.

COLOUR AND PATINA

The colour and surface condition of the wood are of supreme importance, as they constitute one of the principal safeguards against the imposition of spurious pieces, and it is essential, therefore, that the collector should realise what they are and understand how they have been produced. The rubbing and dusting of old bronzes over a long period of time produces a beautiful surface effect called "patina"; and old furniture, by the same processes, acquires a surface condition that, to the connoisseur, constitutes its greatest asset, and makes it worthy alike of his attention and possession. The similarity of appearance between the "patina" on old bronze and the rich metallic lustre on good specimens of old oak, walnut, and mahogany furniture has led to the general adoption of the word

"patina" as descriptive of surface condition on old furniture, and it is so used throughout this book.

Good patina is no prerogative of what, originally, were the finest and most expensive pieces: a simple piece of cottage furniture may be equally endowed with a fine surface condition. But to-day so greatly does the possession of good patina dominate the mind of the advanced collector, that he may readily prefer a simple piece with a fine patina to an important piece without it. The merits of old furniture are not confined to good proportion, beauty of form and line, excellence of workmanship. Such virtues a piece of new furniture could boast when it first left the maker's hand; and a skilful craftsman in these days could produce articles possessing all these qualities. The distinguishing characteristic of fine old pieces, as found to-day—the property which renders them more beautiful and valuable than when originally made—is the patina that the processes of time and human care can alone have given them. All pieces of antique furniture in an original "untouched" condition, *i.e.* with a surface untreated in any way save by the ordinary operations of household dusting and polishing, will have a patina, the quality of which will depend on the amount of the rubbing, polishing, dusting, and handling they have received during their lifetime. It is through atmospheric influence and the effect of domestic care and cleaning that the old pieces have changed their appearance since they left the workshop, where their freshly-cut raw surfaces had been treated with a simple dressing of either linseed oil or beeswax.

Exposure to the air gradually hardens the surface of the wood, and also changes its colour, so that oak turns in time to a rich dark tone, the yellow shades of walnut assume a more golden hue, and the red tinge of mahogany is mellowed into tawny shades of brown. Dust and dirt, escaping the duster and polishing-cloth on the more inaccessible cornices and mouldings and in the backgrounds and interstices of carvings, adhere to the polish and harden into the pores of the wood, so that they cannot later be rubbed off; and these dark parts contrast with the projecting portions of carving and mouldings on which no dust or dirt has been allowed to remain.

The continual polishing and the materials used for the polishing have also had their share in this hardening effect. The old oak furniture was treated simply with raw linseed oil, both when originally made and afterwards in household cleaning. This treatment enriched the colour of the wood and helped to form a hard surface. Old mahogany table

tops (which are not easily scratched to-day) were invariably finished with a dressing of oil, and mahogany furniture in general was usually slightly stained to enrich and equalise the colour, and then beeswaxed[1] or oiled.

This modification of the original colour of the wood gives varied gradations of tone which, with the patina, make a combination that defies the best efforts of the imitator. He cannot obtain in a few weeks or months a result which has taken one hundred and fifty to two hundred years of normal existence to achieve. The colour and patina of genuine furniture, when understood, constitute the collector's greatest protection against spurious imitations.

The individual vicissitudes of old pieces necessarily differ so much that the quality of colour and surface condition to-day vary very greatly, introducing a factor that may go far to make or mar material value. If, for instance, on leaving the workshop, an old piece was put away and never used, it would not possess the patina that has been described, although changes would have occurred in one hundred to two hundred years by the ordinary process of the wood maturing and changing its colour. On the other hand, there is the piece that has continued in the possession of the same family, receiving every possible protection and care. Between these two extremes of neglect and attention it will be apparent that there are many variations of treatment and influence to which old pieces have been subjected during their long existence, and these have a profound effect on their present condition and value. Unfortunately, all genuine old furniture has not come down to us in an untouched condition. About the middle of the nineteenth century a great quantity of furniture of the preceding centuries was ruined by the French polisher at the instance of the owners, who preferred a highly polished surface to the mellow patina of the untouched piece. Before the French polish could be applied it was necessary to clean off the original surface by a solvent; and the patina thus destroyed was replaced by a cold, impenetrable, glassy surface, filling up and obscuring the grain and figure of the wood and giving an even deadness of colour.

The French polishing referred to was done openly with the idea of renovating the old furniture, and must not be confused with the more subtle use of this polish in the modern method of imitating genuine patina, to which reference will be made later. The effect of French polish is one that

[1] The beeswax and turpentine, so largely used for polishing in the households of the eighteenth century, came into general use when turpentine was imported from the East on a commercial scale.

neither age, atmosphere, nor rubbing will alter ; and pieces so treated are not worthy of the collector's notice. To the raw surface of the wood on which it must be applied, the French polish acts as a protective coat against all influences of time and atmosphere, so that it has a definite and fixative effect on the colour of the piece. If the French polish is removed, and the raw surface of the wood thus exposed is rubbed and beeswaxed, in the course of time it will gradually acquire a fresh patinated surface, similar to the patina of old untouched pieces of to-day ; but this result will not be obtained until many years have elapsed.

How French polish depreciates the value of old furniture may be exemplified by an instance from a recent auction sale. A pair of mahogany chests of drawers of identical design and workmanship were put up for sale. One, however, of a dark nut-brown colour was in its original condition ; the other, which had been French polished, was a light tawny yellow. But for the polishing, they would to-day have been identical in appearance and value. Yet, while the untouched chest fetched thirty guineas, the French polished one was sold for fourteen guineas, or less than half.

This goes to prove how important the question of surface condition and colour is to the collector, who buys not only from the point of view of taste, but also from that of investment. Yet, despite its importance, it has received very casual attention in the majority of books on old furniture. Even a piece of bad proportion with coarse carving and poor workmanship may be saved from inferiority by the possession of good patina and colour. Naturally the fact of its design and poor workmanship will depreciate it, but the quality of the patina would make the piece of more interest to the collector than if the qualities were reversed, and while possessing good proportion, fine carving, and excellent workmanship, the surface condition and colour were bad through renovation at the hands of the French polisher.[1] In comparison with workmanship, patina must be adjudged the more important factor.[2]

[1] Although foremost in the work of destruction, the French polisher was not the only destroyer of patina. Pieces are found to-day heavily coated with thick mastic varnish, obscuring the grain and colour of the wood, and forming a surface impossible to patinate, however much it is rubbed and polished. These pieces were probably "renovated" before French polish was introduced.

[2] As it is difficult, if not impossible, to convey in words the appearance of good patina or colour on any particular wood, occasion has been taken, when dealing later with the various classes of furniture, to indicate examples possessing good patina and colour in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, which the collector may study, and so form mental impressions by which to compare other examples that come before him.

OLD ENGLISH FURNITURE

DESIGN AND ORNAMENTATION

The standard of design, proportion, and ornamentation in old English furniture was generally high, sometimes mediocre, and very seldom bad. These qualities together constitute an important factor from the collector's point of view ; but he will find excellence in this respect less rare than the possession of good patina, since that depends only on age and care, while any merit under this heading has been possessed by a piece since it was first made.

There are, of course, degrees in these qualities determined by the original standard of a piece in cost and importance. The furniture of such a designer as Robert Adam, made to his drawings by an expert cabinet-maker like Chippendale, was produced for his very rich clients, and the question of cost was not a primary consideration. The ornamentation was lavish, and the highest quality workmanship, whether in carving, inlaying, veneering, or decorative painting, was employed in its production. So the collector will find that, in all periods, there were several grades of furniture. The highest was intended for the nobility and wealthy classes, and made often, to a special design, of the most costly material in use at the time, and by the most skilled workmen. The other grades were produced in a descending scale of value, as regards ornamentation and material, to suit the incomes of various classes of customers. Although there are one or two exceptions to this rule of original cost governing present value, the same standard of value in regard to these pieces holds good to-day.

One turns on the question of dimensions. Small examples of old furniture are always more highly prized and valued than large examples of the same article. A small walnut bureau bookcase, for instance, measuring 2 ft. in width, is more valuable than one 3 ft. 6 in. in width. A sideboard measuring 4 ft. is more valuable in comparison than one of 6 ft. The houses of our forefathers had larger rooms generally than those of modern houses, and the dimensions of furniture were therefore on a proportionate scale. Small pieces of furniture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were, therefore, an exception, and, in addition to their being more suitable for the requirements of to-day, are appreciated for their rarity. This is not to say that fine pieces of large dimensions are depreciated in value merely on account of their size, but that pieces of smaller dimensions than the general run fetch a higher proportionate price. The value of an old piece

depends, too, not only on excellence in design and workmanship, and on the wood employed for its construction, but on the nature of the article. Fashions in furniture have changed with the years, and articles that were required and largely used by our forefathers are no longer in vogue. For instance, the architect's table, of which numbers were made in the eighteenth century, is of little domestic use to the collector ; and furniture made for bedrooms is not so interesting to him as pieces suitable for display in reception rooms. This question of use or disuse is an important factor in the appreciation of the discerning collector, and often exercises an arbitrary influence on the prices of to-day compared with those of the past.

Other points for the attention of the collector may be more briefly noted. Not every individual is gifted with a sense of proportion ; only to some is it given to be able to detect good and bad proportion at first sight. The collector not so gifted should study all the good examples that he can, and even make note of the dimensions of their respective parts, for he must be able to discern any inconsistency or clumsiness in design and find a satisfactory explanation of it before passing a favourable judgment. Apart from any question of æsthetics, the detection of bad proportion in a piece may lead to the discovery of a spurious reconstruction.

In assessing the value of a design, it may be taken as an axiom that the main constructional lines should never be obscured or attenuated in effect by carving or any other decoration ; and with fine old pieces of good design it will invariably be found that the main constructional lines impress themselves on the eye before the decoration is noticed.

Much of the old furniture designers' success lay in the fact that they set out first to design a piece of furniture to supply a human want, and then considered how it might be improved and beautified by decoration. They followed one of the most important tenets of the craft by decorating a construction instead of constructing a decoration. Their embellishment of a piece, whether by mouldings, flutings, or carving, was always subservient, therefore, to the purpose and the construction of the article. In judging a design, the collector will bear in mind that the decorative motifs employed should first of all be in consonance with that of the style or period of which the piece appears to be an example ; and, secondly, that the execution and quality of the carving should be typical of the workmanship of the time ; and, lastly, that the decoration should convey its due effect of enrichment. Over-ornamentation, by not leaving sufficient plain surfaces to act as a foil, defeats its object.

The collector should endeavour to obtain pieces which are not only perfect as regards genuineness and surface condition, but which have also a certain amount of character or individuality not found in ordinary specimens. This question of character applies not only to the costly piece made for the nobility, but also to the piece made originally for the farmhouse or cottage. A piece possessing one or two features that are unusual is not only more esteemed, but is of greater intrinsic value ; and it is the acquisition of such pieces of unusual character that proclaims the collector of taste and discernment. Individuality is a marked characteristic of old English furniture, probably because many of the finest pieces were produced to special order ; and, certainly, because articles were not turned out by scores to one pattern as under modern commercial methods. And as there were no stereotyped designs, examples even of the same period will exhibit considerable differences in their dimensions, form, treatment, and decoration.

WORKMANSHIP

Quality of workmanship in the consideration of old furniture embraces the standard of cabinetwork shown in the construction of a piece, and the quality of the carving or other ornamentation employed for its decoration. In judging a piece in either respect, regard should be paid to the period in which the piece was, or appears to have been, made. Methods of construction during the three hundred years of production with which this book deals were progressive in refinement ; and as both the cabinetwork and the ornamentation were, to a large extent, particular and different in the case of each wood, it has been found more convenient to deal with the details affecting the quality of workmanship in the respective chapters following, to which reference should be made. The collector should not, however, lose sight of the general statement as to quality of workmanship affecting present-day value, on which special emphasis has been laid in the previous notes dealing with "design and ornamentation."

The questions of seasoning and shrinkage are of special importance in their effect on furniture of all woods. The abnormal consumption of timber at the present day permits of little time being given to the necessary preparation of the wood, and various processes have been devised artificially to shorten the operation. In the eighteenth century timber would not be used until eight or ten years after the trees had been felled. The Dutch

laid their trees in water with their heads up for a period of two years until all the sap had been driven out. Mahogany, which originally came to us as ballast for ships in the West India trade, was felled in the backwoods near the streams and rivers of Central America and rolled into the water to drift down stream. Months often passed before it reached the coast, this prolonged immersion forming a valuable part of the seasoning process.

The technical processes of seasoning will not, perhaps, be of special interest to the collector; but he should understand that wood is, in the words of an expert, "always working," and is peculiarly liable to atmospheric and temperature influence, even after being made up into furniture. A plank, in the course of years, will shrink both in width and thickness, but not in its length, which is the direction of its grain. Walnut shrinks most, and oak probably next in order. This shrinkage has to be allowed for by the cabinetmaker, and necessitates the adoption of particular methods of construction. Drawer bottoms, for instance, were originally made larger than would otherwise have been necessary, and when inserted were glued at the front but not at the back, to allow for the contraction which would naturally take place. Where shrinkage has not been allowed for, defects may often be found in old pieces to-day. In the late eighteenth century, when furniture was often designed by men who were not cabinetmakers, shrinkage was not so fully considered. The ends of "Sheraton" type sideboards are often found cracked, as also are the tops of fine satinwood pieces, such as tables. In the walnut veneered bureaux, the fall flap was constructed of a centre panel framed in on the two ends by cramp pieces with the grain running in the opposite direction to that of the panel. An examination of the side cramps will often show them to project up to $\frac{1}{16}$ in. beyond the edge of the panel, the panel having shrunk across the grain, the side cramps preserving their original length. Cracks will also show in the veneer over the joints of the panels and cramps. The tops of oak refectory tables are often found with a gap, sometimes $\frac{1}{4}$ in. wide, between the planks of which they are made. This also is due to shrinkage across the grain.

Carving[1] can be done as well to-day as in the eighteenth century, but the treatment is not so sure, since the modern carver follows no tradition. The modern commercial factory method of confining a workman to one

[1] For many details of construction and of the quality of carving as it affects furniture of the various woods, reference should be made to the chapters dealing with them; also, for points of constructional interest, which, for reasons of space, cannot be duplicated in these general notes on workmanship, to the notes following on spurious furniture.

branch of his work is a great hindrance to an all-round knowledge of carving. One workman may devote his whole time to fruit, flowers, and birds, in the naturalistic style of Grinling Gibbons, while another spends his days in turning out carved mouldings. The same drawback applies also to the cabinetwork, in spite of the better tools and woodwork machinery now available. The old cabinetmaker, turning out a piece in its entirety, and overcoming by his skill the deficiencies of his tools, perforce put more of his own personality into his piece, and personality is the great factor in success, whether displayed in the man or his work.

Compared with old furniture, the modern often loses by its unerring accuracy. The Greeks counteracted a defect to the human eye by slightly curving the lines of the Parthenon that were to appear straight; and machine-cut moulding, for analogous reasons, may lose its effect compared with that cut by the plane of the eighteenth century workman. The expert woodcutter can detect machine-cut moulding by the marks left on it, which are troublesome to eradicate. A conscientious cabinetmaker would first wet the machine-cut moulding, then glass-paper it and repeat the process; but commercial costings seldom permit so much time to be spent over the work.

It has already been remarked that the old cabinetmakers worked with tools that were markedly inferior to those of the present day, both as regards number and quality. Veneers that were cut with the saw to a thickness of $\frac{1}{16}$ in. can now be cut speedily with a knife to $\frac{1}{64}$ in. The old lathe was primitive in its conception beside the modern appliance, and its tendency to an elliptical plunge in turning had to be counteracted by the skill of the workmen. Mouldings were wrought by hand instead of by machine, and the carver's chisels were fewer in number and less well tempered than they are to-day. The wonderful results achieved by the eighteenth century cabinetmaker therefore are an unfailing tribute to his skill.[1]

CHRONOLOGICAL DATA

To the enthusiastic collector every item of information concerning his hobby will be of interest, but the dates when particular craftsmen lived and

[1] The craft of the cabinetmaker was not generally recognised until after the middle of the eighteenth century, prior to which there had been much rivalry between the joiners and the cabinetmakers as to their respective merits in the production of furniture. Even as late as 1740, Batty Langley's books contain diatribes against the cabinetmakers of the day for the inferiority of their work; and many of the furniture makers were described as joiners or "upholders" in the London Directory and other books of reference.

flourished, or produced catalogues of designs, may be of less concern than an indication of the period in which certain woods were in vogue for the best and most expensive furniture, or the approximate dates at which various articles were first made or came into fashion, or certain motifs of design came into and went out of use. There are certain dates in the histories of Fine and Applied Arts which cannot be lightly disregarded; and in the study of old furniture the memorising of certain chronological facts may save the collector from a mistake, or may be of material assistance in judging the genuineness of the pieces which he finds. For the assistance of the collector, therefore, a table has been compiled of dates of the more important events and developments in the history and design of old English furniture, and this will be found at the end of the volume.

The old craftsmen were conservative people, and slow to initiate startling innovations, confining their efforts more to developments in the design of the existing article. New articles appeared mostly in fulfilment of a definite order from some rich or aristocratic patron; and until the other well-to-do members of contemporary society demanded similar articles in sufficient numbers, such pieces would hardly be produced to form part of the ordinary stock-in-trade. This will explain in some measure why certain types of articles are to-day very rare and difficult to acquire.

The insistent demand by collectors for articles in a wood or style of a period prior to the date when they were first introduced is a direct provocation to the production of spurious examples which may result eventually in their own undoing. The moral follows, that a collector should never seek to acquire articles of a date prior to that at which they came into vogue; and that close scrutiny not unmixed with suspicion should be exercised upon such pieces if in style or material they appear to be of an earlier period.

So far as significance is attached to the word "period" in this book, it indicates the years in which any particular wood was used for the best pieces of furniture. From Tudor to late Stuart days oak enjoyed this distinction. In the reign of William and Mary it gave place to walnut, which in the time of George I. was displaced by mahogany. But the introduction of a new wood did not immediately close down the production of furniture in the material it superseded or in other cheaper woods. The use of oak for furniture has continued from mediæval times to the present day, when, in point of fact, it is more largely used than ever.

PRESENT CONDITION

The condition of old furniture as it is found to-day demands the consideration of the collector, because it may determine the desirability of purchasing. In the course of two hundred years or more, furniture has, naturally, suffered from wear and bad usage ; and the collector will find pieces in all states of repair or disrepair, so that it will be necessary for him to judge whether a piece is not too far gone to purchase. It should be a cardinal rule to purchase only pieces which are in an untouched condition. But the collector should also make a point of not adding to his collection any piece of which there is an important member missing, such as the leg or flap of a table and leg or arm of a chair, even though there is a reduction in the price. It is better to pay a higher price to secure a complete article. Missing members can be replaced, but if the remainder of the piece has a good colour and patina, it will be impossible to bring the restored parts up to the level of the old. Missing mouldings or pieces of veneer, if small, can often be replaced by a careful repairer so that they are hardly noticeable. The collector will generally find that the pieces of old furniture he comes across have been repaired or restored before he sees them. He has not, therefore, the satisfaction of knowing exactly what is original and what is new, and must rely on his knowledge and judgment to avoid buying a piece with a new leg or a new arm. By training his powers of observation, he will be able to detect any serious restoration carried out on a piece offered to him, and, by studying surface condition, patina, and workmanship minutely, be able to tell exactly what repairs have been effected since a piece was made, and also to detect any restorations which are not in keeping and harmony, or of the same period as the original parts.

Note.—To preserve and improve the patina on old pieces of furniture, there is no better polish than the old-fashioned beeswax and turpentine. The various special preparations sold to-day for furniture polishing contain chemicals that, if not actively injurious to the old patina, in no way assist it like the beeswax polish, for the latter, though slower in process, is more lasting in its effects.

CHAPTER II

SPURIOUS FURNITURE: THE IMITATION OF OLD PIECES WITH INTENT TO DECEIVE

I

APART from any question of sentiment, the collector should recognise that in buying a spurious piece he is simply paying for the cost of labour and material at present prices, with a large profit added on; and that for his money he obtains an article that will not be so well made and will not possess the quality of workmanship, patina, or beauty of line of the genuine piece. In short, he acquires a purely commercial article which is neither a work of art nor a rarity.

To reproduce old specimens of furniture for frank sale as reproductions is a legitimate commercial enterprise, and no concern of a work which is devoted solely to the consideration of genuine old examples. But the imitation of old pieces with intent to deceive is a matter that obviously demands the collector's attention, and is accordingly dealt with at some length throughout these pages. The reproducer naturally devotes his attention to those specimens or particular types which are rare, costly, and in great demand, as the value of these alone affords sufficient financial margin to repay with profit the trouble and expense to which he is put. The ways in which the imitation of an old piece may be attempted are dealt with more particularly in the consideration of the articles themselves; but, in general, spurious pieces made to deceive may take any of the following forms:

A. Imitations of entirely new construction.
B. Imitations made up partly of genuine old pieces with additions or restorations carried out in new or old material, usually the latter.
C. The carving of plain but genuine old pieces to increase their value.

D. The transformation of genuine old pieces or parts of such pieces into articles of much higher value by amalgamation with other genuine old articles or parts of them.

II

It has already been stated that genuine patina cannot be reproduced by artificial processes, and that it constitutes the principal safeguard against the imposition of spurious pieces. In devising spurious pieces the efforts of the imitator are mainly directed to obviating or minimising, as far as possible, the difficulties of patinating surfaces. For this reason the capable man, aiming at deception, would not work in any but old material. Then, however, he is faced with the difficulty of concealing all evidence of its previous use. Old oak floor boards used for the top of a spurious refectory table will have the original nail-holes at regular intervals, and these have to be filled up and disguised. A mahogany bookcase, recently examined, had unusual scratches and some ink-stains on the sides which showed that the wood had once formed part of a Victorian table top. Unexplainable nail-holes or joinings in carcase work will generally disclose prior use for another purpose. It can be seen, therefore, that while the use of old material, where not cut, may obviate some of the difficulties of patinated and unpatinated surfaces, it will not avoid all of them.

Old oak beams and planks have the right colour and surface condition for unexposed surfaces, such as the undersides of table tops, underframing and stretchers, or for the insides of cupboards. But the exposed surfaces and any cut edges or new carving will require a patinated surface. Similarly, an old mahogany table top may be cut up to form the sides of a bookcase, which will have the genuine patina of the old top ; but here again the cut edges and any new carving will require treatment. For faked veneered pieces new veneer must be used, since the transfer of veneer from an old carcase to a new one would involve damaging or destroying its patina. It might be possible to remove veneer from, say, an old walnut chest of drawers and utilise it for a smaller piece ; but it is very seldom attempted. Spurious pieces usually have new veneer. Old oak, deal, or pine would, however, be used for the new carcase and for any drawers it possessed.

There are various ways, more or less effective, of imitating the right

colour of old furniture in the various woods, and probably every producer of spurious pieces has his particular recipe. The best colour on oak is obtained by the use of lime, although potash salts are sometimes employed to get a dark colour. Steeping the wood in a solution of washing soda, Brussels earth, bichromate of potash, and ammonia, is another method, but in the course of a few months this occasions a bloom or mould on the surface, due to the soda working out. Mahogany may be merely stained, and walnut treated with lime like the oak ; but walnut, mahogany, and satinwood are generally coloured by the use of nitric acid, which is stopped and removed by subsequent washing with a solution of washing soda. An improved method of using the acid involves first boiling it, and during this operation a small quantity of a secret ingredient is introduced. Ammonia is good for colouring veneers when used in a fume cupboard, as it will then colour them right through. It will stain oak and mahogany, but not walnut.

The requisite colour having been obtained, the next step is to imitate the genuine patina on exposed surfaces, particularly on the newly-cut raw surfaces which have an open grain. To fill up the grain and obtain the hard bronze-like appearance of patina, French polish is employed. The method followed is not the ordinary commercial method of filling up the grain with plaster of Paris and then applying the polish—which would give the piece a bleached appearance ; nor is it a straightforward polishing by which a high gloss is left, as such a piece would be disdained by the advanced collector. The parts to be patinated are coated with French polish in which dirt or colouring matter is mixed, so as to produce the light and shade effects already described in Chapter I. Better results are obtained by treating the surface with linseed oil before applying the French polish, the oil being left on for a day and the surface afterwards thoroughly rubbed down to remove every trace of it ; but the imitator seldom goes to the trouble of this preliminary oiling. After the application of the French polish the whole is "brushed down" with pumice-stone and oil to remove the high gloss and to dull the appearance. The surface is then beeswaxed, and dirt is introduced into the wax to simulate the natural dark tone in the interstices of the carving of a genuine piece caused by the gradual accumulation of dust. Mouldings are treated in the same way. The wax is then left to harden. *This stained or dirtied wax can be scratched or removed with the finger nail, or even rubbed off, and its presence is a sure sign of a faked surface.* The interiors of drawers and cabinets are stained and dirtied to give them an appearance of age. Being unpatinated they are

more difficult to imitate than the exposed surfaces. Old drawer sides and bottoms, obtained from pieces in too dilapidated a state to repair, will sometimes be used for making drawers of a spurious piece, so careful examination should be made to discover any newly cut edges (which will be disguised by rubbing down and staining). The runners of the drawers should also be examined for signs of wear, as it is very difficult to reproduce this. The imitator errs in simulating age in these unexposed parts by signs of dirt and not by signs of wear.

It is surprising how clean and fresh-looking are the interiors of the drawers and cabinets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. *This appearance the imitator fails to reproduce.* Sometimes the difficulty of giving the appearance of age to the interiors of cabinets is overcome by painting them in oil-colour, generally green or brown. Drawers are sometimes pasted over with old newspapers or with a blue paper, it having been a fashion of the time to line drawers in this way ; yet another practice is to spill ink inside the drawers, especially those of a bureau.

III

The troubles over patina are greatly reduced in another kind of spurious article, produced by "carving-up" genuine old pieces to increase their value, a finely carved piece being naturally of greater value than a plain one. This carving is largely adopted for oak and mahogany furniture. In this direction the imitator has, unfortunately, a large field for his energies ; the fact that he has an old surface to work upon obviates the use of new material, and some very elaborate deceptions are the result of his handiwork. It should be borne in mind, however, that the newly carved surface will have an open grain, which must be filled up with wax and dirt, and the surface doctored with colouring matter, to get the new portions the same colour as the old. *Careful examination in a strong light of a piece thus tampered with will show up the variations in the colour of the new and old parts, owing to the inability of the imitator to disguise his work completely.*

The close inspection of carving should be directed also not only to determine the quality of the workmanship, but to see whether it is in keeping with the design of the piece and with the period of which it is supposed to be an example. And in regard to all carved work very careful attention should be paid to the wear of the carving. The imitator, in the effort to simulate

age, gives his carving a worn or rounded effect all over ; but in genuine work it will be found that while some of the more prominent parts of the carving through long handling have become blunted, other and less prominent parts are as crisp and sharp as when originally executed. This unequal wear of the carving is very noticeable when compared with the level, worn appearance of the imitation. To give an appearance of age to his carving, the imitator usually brushes down oak carving with a hard metal brush and mahogany carving with a soft wire brush. Glass-paper is also freely used, although genuine old carving was never treated in this way. He cannot spare time, however, to consider carefully what parts of the carving would naturally be worn in the course of time and what parts would preserve their pristine sharpness, and to treat each accordingly.

IV

Unless he produces an exact replica of an old piece, the maker of spurious furniture invariably commits some solecism in the proportion or design of his wares. He is torn between the desire to turn out a passable sham antique and the desire to increase its selling possibilities by making it of small dimensions to suit the rooms of to-day, or else a little unusual or unique ; so that it appears of greater value than the general run of such articles.

Not only will he err in his over-all dimensions, but in the size of the doors, the spacing of the legs, the proportion of a top to its stand and of width to height, he will usually blunder badly. He will also jumble up his styles of decoration and use late eighteenth century decoration on a mid-eighteenth century piece. It is only by careful study of genuine pieces that the collector will become familiar with the general proportions peculiar to each period ; and will then be quick to note any piece that is not in harmony with his impressions of furniture design in the respective woods.

The popular belief that worm-holes are introduced into faked furniture by firing small shot at it, is one that dies hard. Certainly it may have been done in the past, but it is a method that is seldom if ever resorted to at the present day. The advanced collector would prefer genuine furniture without this sign of supposed age, for he realises that a piece affected by the worm is being slowly depreciated both in strength and value ; and also that eradicating the worm is extremely difficult and involves such radical measures of

treatment as will probably destroy the patina, thus depreciating the value of the piece. The imitator is hardly likely, therefore, to simulate a condition that may diminish the value of his wares. But in touching on the question of worm-holes, it may be mentioned that the imitator in turning a bulbous leg, say, out of an old oak beam, has been known to cut through a worm burrow, not sectionally but longitudinally, and this long tunnel of the worm appearing on the surface has to be filled up with wax for its concealment. Sooner or later the filling sinks in or falls out, this minute defect serving to disclose the whole deception ; as, naturally, worm-holes on genuine pieces would only show the round orifice on the surface and not the long burrowing into the interior. This applies to oak, walnut, and also to old deal, when the latter is used for carcase work. The collector should always be wary of any piece that shows a worm-hole longitudinally on its surface, or on the carcase work inside.

The faking of metal work is a comparatively simple matter. Iron lock plates, straps, hinges, etc., for oak pieces will quickly become rusted and pitted, if buried in common salt. Brass mounts can acquire an antique appearance in a single night if shut up in a box of mahogany shavings saturated with sal ammoniac. They come out green, but are of an antique colour when rubbed up. New handles and other mounts can sometimes be detected by the screws used to secure them. Old screws were cut by hand with the file, and show an uneven spiral very different from the regular angular thread cut by a modern machine. It is inevitable, however, that many genuine old pieces will have lost some of their mounts ; and the restoration of these, if well made and of pattern for the piece, will not depreciate its value.

Apart from a critical examination to detect fakes, details of which are set out in regard to various articles in succeeding chapters, there is one test that can be immediately applied. *Genuine patina is always warm to the touch ; while faked patina is invariably cold to the hand.* This coldness is attributable to the French polish used. Wood is naturally warm to the touch, but any glaze, such as French polish, applied to it has the same effect as that of glass, and strikes cold in comparison. The same difference in warmth may be experienced between carved wood and composition ornament applied to the surface of wood.

Resilience in a piece is another simple test. *A genuine old piece will invariably give a little under stress.* A chair when sat in or a table when pressed down will give a little or rock slightly and then gather itself together, as it were, and firmly resist further pressure. This is due to slight shrinkage at the joints. During a long existence the mortice and tenon or dovetail joints shrink and become slightly loose, so that a sudden stress will cause

them to give a little and produce a sensation of springiness ; but a newly constructed piece if picked up, pressed down, or dragged across the floor will always be hard, rigid, and unyielding, since the joints are still fresh and have not shrunk.[1] This is an example where the question of the shrinkage of wood helps the collector to detect a spurious piece.

In succeeding chapters will be found particulars of other tests based on shrinkage, which may be applied for the discovery of spurious furniture. Signs of shrinkage in an old piece are a further proof of its genuineness, such as the cracking of the veneer in panels of wardrobes, bookcases, etc., particularly in walnut and late eighteenth century furniture, caused by the shrinkage of the carcase on which it is glued. In some faked furniture, however, this effect of shrinkage does not appear, either because old wood, which has already shrunk, is employed ; or because, the piece being new, defects due to shrinkage have not had time to develop.

Another rough test turns on weight, but is not so certain. Old pieces are invariably much heavier than modern pieces of similar size and design ; and old pieces of satinwood, especially if solid, like chairs, are often surprisingly heavy when picked up.

In examining furniture nothing helps the collector more than the strong light of day. In artificial light it is very difficult to perceive gradations of colour which in daylight can be observed with ease. The difference in the colours of the wood of old and new parts, and the differences in their surface condition are more easily discerned in full daylight, and the efforts of the copyist to mask restored parts by staining the wood will then become apparent.

[1] Occasionally, of course, an old piece in a rickety condition may have been taken to pieces and glued up afresh. But this would be an exceptional case, and the test is a good one for furniture of all woods, except large pieces, such as bookcases, to which it cannot well be applied.

CHAPTER III

FURNITURE OF THE OAK PERIOD

1500–1700

HISTORICAL SURVEY: (*a*) GOTHIC

FROM a study of illustrations of French and Italian contemporary interiors, and of the finely made and carved pieces of furniture of other nations which have survived from the same period, it is clear that English domestic equipment of the fifteenth century lagged far behind that of the Continent. Authorities on English mediæval life agree that only in the Royal palaces, the castles of the nobility, and the monastic houses was furniture of any pretensions to be found, and this was of a crude character, made by carpenters, and sufficing only for the simplest needs. Purely Gothic in design and inspiration, this pre-Renaissance oak furniture comprised chests, coffers, hutches or movable cupboards, the early and simple form of buffet, tables of the trestle type, beds, benches, and stools.

Even chairs were rare, and regarded more as an attribute of high estate than as ordinary articles of domestic use; and not more than one or two, for the use of the lord and his lady, would be found in a great household. The low standard of domestic comfort was a reflex of the hard life and coarse manners of the day; and latent hostilities, and the waters of the English Channel, barred any ameliorating influence which could have resulted from closer intercourse with the more refined and civilised standards of the Continental peoples.

This Gothic oak furniture can only possess an historical interest for the collector, since examples of it are, to-day, practically unprocurable. The few existing pieces to be found in museums and private collections are seen in two different conditions, one showing the wood in a natural dry and unpolished state, and the other having a polished and patinated surface. It is probable that all this early oak, following the usual treatment of woodwork of the time, was originally decorated in bright colour, and this

supposition is borne out by some of the existing pieces still having traces of colour discernible on them. But the colour, having been applied mostly in the form of tempera, has perished or worn away, leaving the wood in the dry unpolished state in which it is now seen. Those pieces with a patinated surface probably acquired it after the colour had disappeared.

(*b*) RENAISSANCE

When the Turks captured Constantinople in 1453, the Greeks, with their classical learning and traditions, fled to Italy, where the highly trained craftsmen, ripe for fresh inspiration, quickly adopted the ideas of the refugees. From Italy the classical influence spread rapidly to Burgundy, Spain, and France, for the fugitive Greek workmen and their apt pupils sought work where they could, and thus spread the new movement. During twenty-four years' exile in France, Henry VII. of England had ample opportunity to become conversant with the "new learning" and the greater domestic comfort and refinement of that country; and, on his accession to the throne, he brought over Italian and Burgundian workmen to build his palaces at Sheen and Molesey. Sheen is said to have been built in "Burgundian style," but nothing now remains of either dwelling. It is probable that much of the furniture used for them was, like their style, imported from abroad. The influx of foreign workmen and motifs of design had a material effect on native taste, just as the classical study underlying the Renaissance affected learning everywhere. But the new influence permeated English design very slowly, probably because most of the skilled workmen were enrolled in the Ecclesiastical Building Guilds of the monastic houses and were steeped in the Gothic tradition. It was not until the following reign that the renaissance in classical design began to move perceptibly.

The vanity of Henry VIII. led him into a competition of extravagance and splendour of state with his near neighbour, François I. of France; and, like his father, by liberal offers of pay, he attracted foreign workmen to this country for the further embellishment of his palaces and the building of the new one of Nonesuch. The Royal example in house building and domestic luxury excited a spirit of emulation among the great nobles, who commenced building and furnishing new dwellings on a lavish scale, employing the designers and craftsmen who had been working for the king.

COLOUR AND PATINA

The value of genuine old oak furniture depends largely on its patina, colour, and carving. The patina should be hard and lustrous; the colour should be a dark rich brown, turning to a tone nearly black in the crevices of the mouldings and the background of the carving, by reason of the hardening of the dust and oil in these parts. This effect of the darker parts acting as a setting to the lighter portions is a prominent feature of a piece with a good patina. As mentioned in Chapter I, the dark colour and hard surface of oak are mainly due to the use (prior to the introduction of the beeswax polish) of raw linseed oil, both for the first dressing and subsequent household polishing.

Many pieces of oak of the Elizabethan and seventeenth century periods are found to-day with their surfaces coated with a thin transparent varnish. It is rather a moot point whether the varnish was applied long after the piece was made or whether it was done by the maker after the surface had first received a dressing of oil. The former seems more probable, as these varnished pieces appear to have a certain accumulation of dirt, formed by age, under the varnish, thus showing that it could not have been applied when the piece was new. The effect of this varnish is not detrimental to the patina; if anything, it has helped to enrich it, and therefore it must not be confused with the thick, treacly variety mentioned in Chapter I.[1]

DESIGN AND ORNAMENTATION

English oak furniture separates itself rather naturally into two phases. The earlier, or Tudor phase, often exhibiting lingering traces of the Gothic tradition (as in the linen-fold panel, which persisted up to about 1560), shows a progressive advance in quality and achievement from the time of Henry VIII. until it reached its greatest development in the later period of Elizabeth's reign.[2] The second phase (seventeenth century oak furniture)

[1] As an example of good colour and patina in oak, the court cupboard W 32, 1913, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington, may be studied.

[2] The Elizabethan furniture makers, hampered by lack of tradition and experience in dealing with Renaissance forms of decoration, turned for inspiration to the Low Countries, where the Flemish Renaissance had then reached its fullest development. One of the most famous Flemish designers, Hans Vredemann de Vries, published in 1580 a collection of his designs of furniture, gardens, fountains, armour, gold and silver work, etc. A

shows an equally progressive decadence from the reign of James I. to that of William and Mary, when walnut came into general vogue and oak furniture ceased to be made except in the country districts and for the cheaper markets.

The decoration of oak furniture by carving is of three varieties. Carving in relief is the most valuable form, of which the frieze and small cupboard doors on the court cupboard, Fig. 10, are good examples. Arabesque carving, as seen on the frieze of the refectory table, Fig. 5, is also frequently met with. In this style of carving, the design is cut in square with a flat background—the effect being that of an applied fret—and to enrich its appearance the background is matted. The third variety consists of incised or shallow gouged lines, usually in a geometrical pattern; and where this constitutes the only decoration, it was probably done by the joiner who made the piece and not by a carver. Carving on a genuine old piece that is shallow and crudely done is not a sign that it is an early example, but rather that it is a poor one of country make.

Inlaid marquetry was also a favourite method for the decoration of panels, friezes, etc.; in Elizabethan and early seventeenth century oak furniture, holly, sycamore, and box-wood were the woods generally employed for this purpose. This inlay was deeply cut and coarse in its execution, architectural, floral, arabesque, and geometrical designs being those most used.

Pieces of oak furniture are sometimes found inscribed with a date, thus showing the year they were made. This feature naturally adds a considerable amount of interest and value to a piece and is peculiar to oak furniture of the seventeenth century.

Although some sort of glue must have been used for inlaid marquetry and for the application of applied mouldings, bosses, pendants, and split balusters, the construction of oak furniture was mainly dependent on tenon, mortise, and pegging without the use of glue. Mortises were cut in the uprights or stiles, the ends of the horizontal members or rails were tenoned into them, and oak pegs were driven from the outside through both. If the

comparison of the English furniture of this period with that of the Low Countries will clearly show that the English craftsmen freely copied and adapted these designs. And this similarity, which is more in ornamentation than in general form, also resulted from the considerable importation of Flemish furniture into this country at the same period.

holes bored through the tenon were a shade out of line with those of the mortise, it had the object and effect, when the pegs were driven home, of drawing or forcing the tenon more tightly into the mortise. The spaces between the stiles and rails were filled with panels on accepted building lines, and probably with the knowledge that this method provided most suitably for the inevitable shrinkage in the wood.

Drawers in furniture of the Oak period from late Tudor times to the middle of the seventeenth century, and considerably later than this in pieces of country make, differed from the later drawers in the fact that they worked on runners, fixed to the carcase, and sliding in grooves cut in the drawer sides. These early drawers were made without dovetailing, being lipped and nailed together. The nails used were of drawn iron, cut and pointed by the smith, and entirely different from the cut nail or brad in modern use.

SPURIOUS OAK FURNITURE

The collector will have to deal with a large number of spurious pieces that have been, and are still being, made from beams, floor boards, etc., originally belonging to old houses and ships. The antique appearance of these modern pieces is obtained in various ways, as briefly described in Chapter II. The reproduction of a patinated surface, however it is done, usually results in a dull and lifeless appearance, the colour being a yellowish brown, and in some cases a tinge of green being noticeable. The collector must learn to distinguish the cold, soft, waxy feeling of the spurious piece from the hard metallic surface and rich lustre of the genuine example. Although these spurious articles have at first a more or less passable imitation of the genuine patina, the effect is only transitory, as stain, French polish, and wax which are thickly coated on to the wood will, in the course of seven or eight years, sink in and perish, leaving the piece dry and bare-looking without a trace of the antique appearance originally obtained. Rubbing and beeswaxing will not have any effect on this false patina or prevent its premature decay.

Spurious pieces of oak furniture are generally imitations of Gothic and Tudor articles, as these, being the most costly and rare, will be the less difficult to sell. The notes given above refer only to spurious pieces with a patinated surface. In the brief survey of Gothic furniture at the beginning of this chapter it was mentioned that these very early pieces were generally

found to-day with the wood in a dry and unpolished state. Of this fact the imitator is well aware, and Belgium is mainly responsible for the importation in a raw state of many copies in old oak of rare pieces, such as chests, stools, chairs, and tables elaborately carved with Gothic ornament. The treatment of these pieces with lime to obtain the grey colour of old unpolished oak is done after its arrival in this country. Careful examination of these pieces should reveal to the collector their spurious nature. The mere fact of their being Gothic pieces, genuine examples of which, as previously stated, are practically unprocurable, should arouse strong suspicion at once. These pieces, being of foreign manufacture, are ornamented with carved decoration of a much more elaborate and flamboyant character than is found on the English furniture of the Gothic period.

The wide difference in value between carved and uncarved pieces naturally brings oak into the category of furniture of which the imitator seeks to enhance the value by "carving-up," and the collector must accordingly be on his guard against articles so treated. Arabesque carving is generally resorted to for this type of deception, as it has the important advantage that the face of the new ornament is left with the original surface ; only the sides of the design and the background will be freshly cut. The newly cut surfaces will then be stained and dirtied so as to give them every appearance of age.

The articles of which spurious examples are most frequently made, and details of the methods adopted for making them, are described in the following notes.

Hutches and Dole Cupboards.—The Gothic hutch or dole cupboard with pierced ornaments on the front and door was crudely constructed of planks mortised and nailed together. The timber forming the sides of these pieces is roughly hewn, and the thickness of the wood may differ by an inch between the top and the bottom. No great care or skill is apparent in the workmanship, and it is evident that these pieces, contrasted with the work of the eighteenth century, were but the first feeble efforts in the great tradition of English cabinetwork.

The dole cupboard with ornaments of pierced Gothic design when found to-day is usually spurious. The rarity of the genuine piece is an irresistible temptation to the imitator, who finds a means to his end in the plain oak cupboard of the seventeenth century, which, being very similar in form to

the dole cupboard, is easy to adapt to a semblance of its more valuable prototype by piercing its front with Gothic ornamentation.

Court Cupboards.—One of the most important and handsome articles of the Oak period is the court cupboard. The earliest known examples of this piece of furniture date from about the end of the first quarter of the sixteenth century. These early specimens, of which only a few are in existence, show lingering traces of Gothic design in their decoration, such as the linen-fold pattern.

The court cupboard dating from the Elizabethan period is similar in shape and form to the example illustrated (Fig. 10), which dates from the second half of the seventeenth century. In earlier examples the cornices rest on carved bulbous supports standing on the platform formed by the top of the lower portion; in the seventeenth century these supports lost their bulbous form and were replaced by plain turned ones of a vase or baluster shape; and still later in the seventeenth century these supports were omitted altogether and their place was taken by turned pendants similar to the two examples shown, Figs. 10 and 12.

The earlier examples of the court cupboard with carved bulbous supports are naturally the rarest and most desirable. The presence of inlaid marquetry of a floral design, such as is sometimes found on the cupboard doors or panels in the upper portion, also adds considerably to the value and interest of a piece, while the addition of carved terminal or caryatid figures is another feature which makes a piece more important.

Another form of court cupboard is called the tridarn. This has the addition of a hooded canopy fitted to the top and is generally of Welsh origin. Most existing examples are either plain or else decorated with incised or crude carving showing that they are of country make. The majority found to-day date from the late seventeenth century.[1] Many of these tridarns are found carved with a design composed of dragons, which was a favourite Welsh motif.

Buffets.—In addition to the court cupboard another article of furniture called the buffet was made, and, from the examples now existing, buffets would appear to date from the last quarter of the sixteenth century to the first half of the seventeenth century.[2] Unlike the court cupboards, there

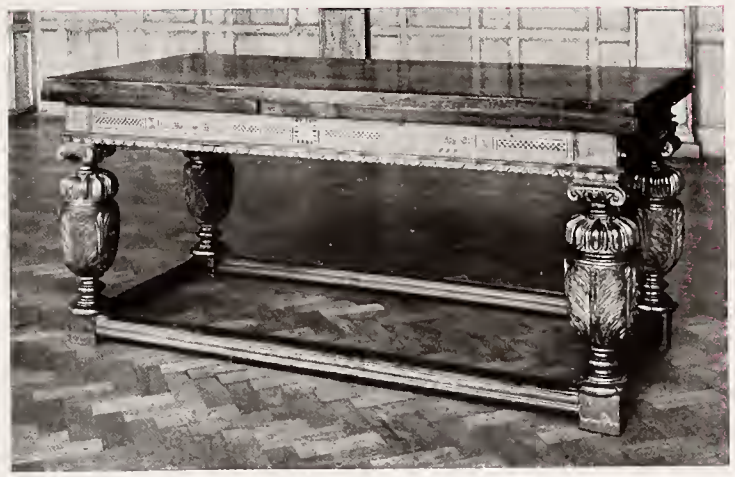
[1] The manufacture of tridarns, with that of other plain oak furniture, continued into the eighteenth century.
[2] These dates do not include the rare Gothic cupboard on square legs, sometimes called a buffet.

An oak Dole Cupboard, with pierced and carved Gothic decoration.
Late 15th Century.

Fig. 2. Col. R.

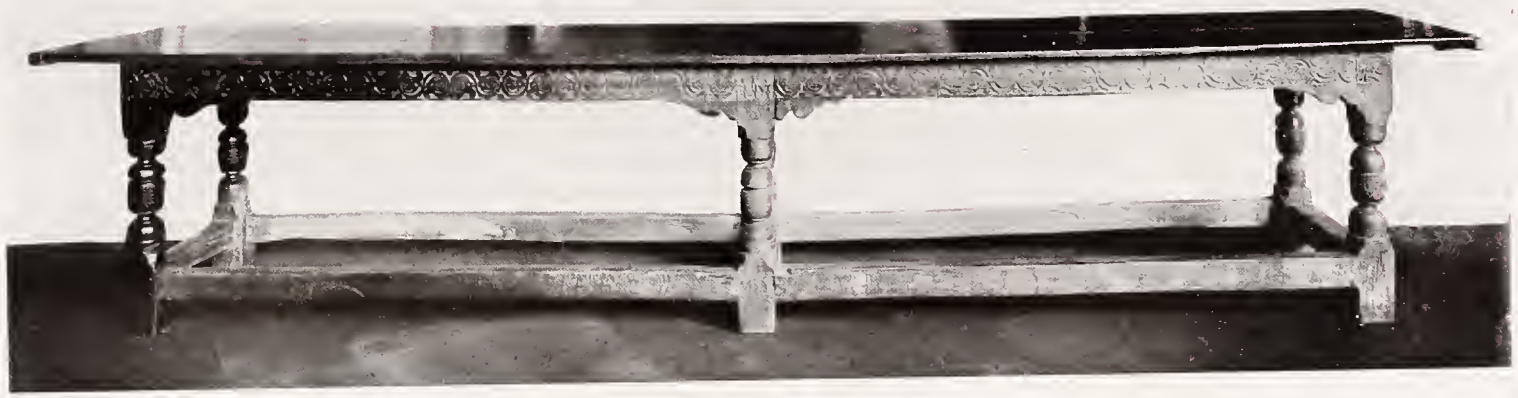
An oak Coffer, carved with conventional floral design; across the keyhole is inscribed "This is Esther Hobsonne Chist 1637."

Fig. 3. Col. R.



An oak Drawer-top Table; frieze decorated with checker pattern inlay.
Circa 1600.

Fig. 4. Col. R.



An oak Table; frieze decorated with strap carving in conventional design.
Circa 1675.

Fig. 5 Col. H.

do not seem to have been many buffets made after the Restoration, and therefore existing examples to-day are rare and (having only been made during the best period of oak furniture) are usually finely carved and sometimes decorated with inlaid marquetry.

In shape, the buffet is a piece of furniture formed of two tiers, which are upheld in the front by bulbous supports; these being afterwards altered to the plain baluster or vase-shaped supports similar to those of the court cupboard. The upper tier has a cupboard with a single door set in the middle; the sides of the cupboard are sloped at an angle from the front to the back. The lower tier is an open shelf with the back usually left open, no doubt because such pieces of this date would have been placed against an oak panelled wall. Sometimes these buffets are found without the cupboard, but with a shelf like the bottom portion.

The buffet, being a very difficult piece to find to-day, has received the attention of the maker of spurious furniture, who has produced many elaborate specimens with richly carved bulbous supports and finely carved and inlaid panels to the cupboard. Besides these spurious pieces of modern construction, there are many reconstructions of forty or fifty years ago, made up of pieces of old oak furniture which bear a slight resemblance in shape to the Tudor or Jacobean buffet. The top part of these adaptations is generally formed of an old oak chest which is placed on a stand with turned legs. But the collector should be able to discover the character of this kind of "made up" piece without much trouble or acumen.

Chairs.—Oak chairs of the Gothic period are extremely rare. Stools and benches were the usual form of seat, and oak chests were also utilised for this purpose. There are extant, however, a number of oak armchairs of late Elizabethan days, characterised by the design and richness of the carving and by the fact that the top rail of the back is between the two uprights, whereas, from the reign of James I. the top rail rested on the uprights; for examples of this, compare the chair of Elizabeth's reign (Fig. 6) with the one of the time of Charles II. (Fig. 11). The cresting on the top rail in the early armchairs was small, but in the seventeenth century it gradually increased in size, eventually having the addition of ear-pieces to support it where it overlapped the uprights.

From the time of the Commonwealth a number of single oak chairs appear to have been made, and they are more plentiful to-day than the

armchairs. Those generally found, however, date from the Restoration period. The front stretchers and legs are either decorated with knobbed turning in the Commonwealth manner or, in later specimens, with the turned baluster or spiral twist of the Restoration. The design of the backs of these single chairs often indicates the locality in which they were made. The type, for instance, with the colonnade back, having round arches with inverted drops and the split baluster decoration on the uprights, was very popular in Yorkshire and Derbyshire.

The accession of Charles II. saw the gradual introduction of chairs, stools, and day-beds made of walnut and beech, but this innovation did not stop the manufacture of oak chairs and settles, as a large number dating from this period have survived.

It should be noted that all these oak chairs have stretchers, and if the collector comes across an example without stretchers, he should recognise that they have been lost and consequently the chair is imperfect. In such cases the ends of the legs have often been cut off to remove traces of the mortises into which the stretchers were tenoned.

Upholstered furniture made its first appearance in England in the reign of James I. So far as the collector is concerned this fact is only of historical interest, for but a very few specimens, in the form of chairs, stools, and couches, have survived. This furniture, in its various forms, is quite unlike the contemporary English furniture. It was either imported from France or was copied here from French examples to special orders given by the wealthy nobility. The upholstering was invariably carried out in velvet, studded with large gilt-headed nails and trimmed with gold or silver fringes; the legs and stretchers of the chairs and stools are generally of beech and sometimes ornamented by painting or gilding. In some of the examples at Knole, the velvet is pasted over the entire frame of the chair so that no woodwork is visible.

This early Stuart upholstered work seems to have been an exotic phase which died out, leaving no apparent effect on the design of the subsequent oak furniture. It was not until the Commonwealth that upholstery again made an appearance on chairs and couches. These were upholstered with stamped or painted leather which was stretched and secured to the framework by brass-headed nails. Like all Puritan furniture, these upholstered leather chairs are plain and severe in design with low square backs, the only ornamentation consisting of the turning to the stretchers and legs.

An oak Armchair of a rare type, with turned spindles in back and arms; panel of back decorated with inlay of floral design.

Late 15th Century.

Fig. 6. Col. P.

An oak Chest, with drawers, decorated with applied mouldings, split balusters, and inlay of mother-of-pearl and bone. (The carved bracket feet are not original, as they are of mid 18th Century design.)

Dated 1653.

Fig. 7. Col. R.

An oak Settle, with panelled back inscribed "F. D. 1681."

Fig. 8. Col. P.

An oak Sidetable, with carved bulbous front legs.
Circa 1595.

Fig. 9. Col. A.

SETTLES AND JOINT STOOLS

Settles.—Most of the settles of the Oak period that are in existence to-day date from the last three-quarters of the seventeenth century ; a typical example, dated 1681, is shown in Fig. 8. Sometimes settles are found with movable backs, which can be let down to rest on the arms and so form a table. These table-settles in their original condition are very rare. They date from the Cromwellian period and are known as "Monks' Benches." Chairs are also found with the same arrangement.

Joint or Coffin Stools.—Joint or "joyned" stools of the first half of the sixteenth century are of Gothic construction and different in form from the stools of late Elizabethan days, which were of an oblong shape with four legs connected by stretchers. This late sixteenth century type of stool continued to be made in the same form all through the seventeenth century, and must have been made in considerable numbers in the country well into the eighteenth century.

The most valuable joint stools found to-day (with the exception of Gothic specimens, which are of great rarity) are those dating from the time of Elizabeth and James I., and these generally have fluted legs and friezes decorated with carving. Examples dating from the Cromwellian period with plain turned legs and moulded or plain friezes are more frequently found. The carved examples of the earlier period have seven or eight times the value of the later type, and it is therefore of this early stool that counterfeits are made out of old timber. Many genuine joint stools have been fitted with new tops, which naturally depreciate their value. To ascertain whether a top is new, carefully examine its edges. For a restoration of this kind, the new top would be made out of an old piece of oak, such as the top of an old gate table, having the genuine patina ; but the wood would have to be cut, and it is by the staining and rubbing of the cut edges that it may be detected. Sometimes these stools have been made from a dilapidated gate table, beyond repair, which affords all the necessary material. This copy is of the class in which genuine old pieces or parts of pieces are transformed into articles of a much higher value. Careful examination will show the changes in the original construction, as it will be impossible to hide these in every particular.

Stools are also found with the addition of oval tops, converting them into small tables. These tops are not part of the original article, but have been added at some later stage of their existence. They are usually of deal or elm with two drop flaps which rest on supports that pull out, and these

supports are cut into the frieze, a further proof that these stools were not originally made as tables.

Refectory and Draw-top Tables.—The earliest form of table was the trestle table. This type of table persisted throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to the middle of the sixteenth century. The few examples which have survived are of crude construction, long and narrow, the top being formed of three or four roughly hewn planks fixed on to two or three trestle supports according to the length.

The trestle table was followed by the draw-top table. This was the favourite type of table during the reign of Elizabeth, and a good example is illustrated in Fig. 4. In this table a leaf is drawn out at each end from under the top centre leaf, so as to extend the length of the table when required ; on the side leaves being drawn out the centre leaf drops to the same level. This invention was copied from the contemporary Flemish tables.

Draw-top tables are generally found with the bulbous legs of the Elizabethan period ; but in the next reign this type was superseded by the table with the fixed top and plain turned legs of a baluster or vase-shape design (Fig. 5). These tables with the fixed tops which were not capable of enlargement were made sometimes with six or eight legs according to their length. Another variation in design between the earlier and later tables is that the former have their stretchers T-shaped in section, whilst the later examples have a square, four-sided stretcher similar to the tables illustrated.

Tables with fixed top and plain baluster legs were made throughout the seventeenth century and genuine specimens exist in considerable numbers to-day. The most valuable are those with a carved frieze on all four sides, thus showing that they were meant to stand in the centre of a room ; more often, however, they are found with the frieze carved on one side only, denoting they were originally meant to be used as side tables. Naturally the former are the more valuable, and, for this reason, many genuine side tables have in recent years had carved friezes added to the three plain sides.

It is the Elizabethan draw-top table with carved bulbous legs and an inlaid or carved frieze that is rare, and genuine examples are to-day few and far between ; on the other hand, spurious tables of this type are numerous and widespread. In these imitations the bulbous legs are often seen with wide cracks due to the timber splitting ; this is not a sign of age, but rather

An oak court Cupboard, decorated with carving in conventional design, and split baluster ornaments, bosses, and applied mouldings. The carved terminal figures each side of the centre panel of the upper part portray a man and a woman with their hair dressed in the fashion of the time. These figures probably represented the original owner of the cabinet and his wife.

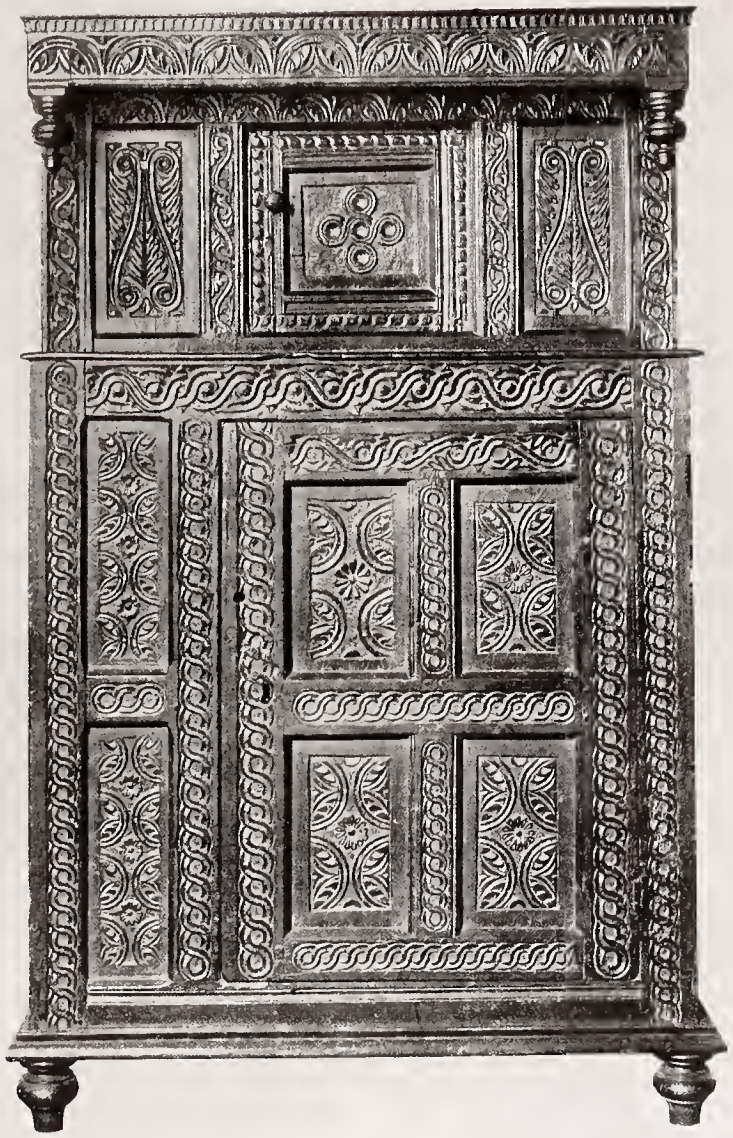
Circa 1660.

Fig. 10. Col. I.

An oak Armchair, back surmounted by large scroll cresting. Front legs and arm supports decorated with knobbed turning.

Circa 1670.

Fig. 11. Col. P.



An oak Court Cupboard. The framing to the panels and doors is carved with the guilloche pattern, an ornament frequently used in the decoration of carved oak furniture from 1575–1650.

Circa 1650.

Fig. 12. Col. P.

an indication of new turning worked out of an old oak beam. The tops are often made from old oak floor boards, in which case careful examination will disclose nail-holes at regular intervals. On a genuine top, gaps should show between the planks owing to shrinkage of the wood over a long period; and in the absence of these gaps suspicion should be aroused. The Elizabethan table illustrated in Fig. 4 has a considerable gap between the planks which in recent years has been filled in with a strip of wood. Spurious tops often have a rough and uneven surface; and the veins of the wood appear to stand out in relief. This is due to the softening of the fibre between the veins or year rings of the wood by alkalies used for obtaining the old colour; and, when the subsequent brushing down with a steel brush was done, this softened fibre was worn away, leaving the veins projecting. The surface of a genuine top with a good patina is generally smooth. Another reason why the veins appear so prominent arises from the fact that the soft porous fibres are altered in colour by the stain, but the veins remain unaffected by it. The end grain of the cut edges, too, will show a grey colour, however much they are rubbed or stained.

In spurious examples, the appearance of wear on the stretchers is generally done very irregularly and made as deep on the inside of the stretcher as on the outside. In genuine pieces the wear will be found to be deeper on the outside than on the inside edge, and the line of wear will be more regular.

Many genuine tables have lost their original stretchers, which have been replaced. The stain and French polish used on these restored stretchers to give them a patinated surface will soon become marked and scratched by the feet. This would not occur on a genuine stretcher.

Gate-leg Tables.—The oak gate table, with its top comprised of a centre leaf on which are hinged two side flaps supported by gates swinging on pivots, was made in considerable numbers in the Cromwellian days up to the end of the Oak period.

These tables are similar in form and construction throughout this period and only vary in the turning of the legs, which altered in fashion in a similar manner to the legs of chairs. The most desirable and rarest type of turning is the spiral twist, which was in vogue from about 1655 to 1680. In other tables the stretchers are decorated with turning similar to the legs; while in ordinary types the stretchers are four-sided and generally decorated with a grooved moulding on the top edge.

Another rare type of gate-leg table is the large example with two gates on each side instead of one. There is also the small gate table measuring 2 ft. or less across the top. One variety of this small table is known as the "Harlequin Table," which has the centre leaf supported by two turned legs mounted on a base board, instead of four connected by stretchers.

These small tables, owing to their size and rarity, are in comparison much more valuable to-day than those of medium size; most of them date from the Restoration period. They are also found made of elm or pear wood; those made from pear wood usually have a fine patina of a reddish colour, as the surface of this wood patinates more readily than any other of the woods used for furniture making.

The tops of gate-leg tables are generally oval, although a square variety is sometimes found, and the edges of the tops are square or rounded in section, as the moulded edge did not come into fashion during the Oak period. The side flaps have bead joints (except in very early specimens) which, when the table is open, fit into a groove in the centre leaf; the absence of this bead joint generally points to the top being modern, as many gate-leg tables are found to-day without their original tops. Sometimes the tops are found decorated with a shallow carved design. This carving is not contemporary, as no tables of the Oak period ever had their tops decorated in this manner.

Another type of oak table which was made in large numbers is an oblong table with the top measuring about 3 ft. by 2 ft. This, having one drawer in front, was intended to stand against the wall. The examples now in existence of this table appear to have been made from the beginning to the end of the seventeenth century. Like the gate-leg tables, these oblong oak tables vary only in the design of the legs.[1]

Chests.—Of oak chests the rarest examples are those of the Gothic period. These are generally of rough construction and decorated with crude, shallow carving. The finest examples of the time of Elizabeth and James I. usually have their fronts decorated with arches and sometimes with caryatid or terminal figures. The panels are found inlaid with marquetry in a floral design and the carving is in high relief and rich in appearance. Chests of the seventeenth century, similar to the example illustrated in Fig. 3, show decadence by the profusion of carved ornament which completely covers the whole front.

[1] Towards the end of the seventeenth century they are also found made of walnut and fruit wood.

There is another type of chest dating from the last half of the seventeenth century, in which the front is decorated with shaped panels of varying design formed by applied mouldings. Sometimes these chests have the panels inlaid with bone and mother-of-pearl. This style of decoration is usually found to-day on chests with drawers, similar to the example illustrated (Fig. 7).

In judging the quality and value of a chest, attention should be paid to whether the carving is "relief," "arabesque," or "incised."

The plain oak chest of the seventeenth century, of which large quantities must have been made, is often found to-day with its stiles and panels carved up to increase its value. Very often the plain panels of these chests are inlaid with marquetry of floral design, in imitation of Elizabethan examples.

Oak Dressers.—Judging from the design of the earliest oak dressers that exist to-day, it would appear that they were not made in any great quantity before the Restoration, while the majority hardly come within the scope of this chapter, since they were made in the eighteenth century. The early examples are found with legs of spiral twist or baluster pattern, the fronts of the drawers being decorated with small shaped panels formed by applied mouldings, and the framing dividing the drawers being ornamented with bosses or split balusters, a method of decoration much in vogue at this period. In addition to the dresser with legs, another type existed without legs, similar to Fig. 14.

From the beginning of the eighteenth century, oak dressers, with top parts formed of open shelves, were made in considerable numbers.[1] In the reign of Queen Anne the spiral twist and baluster legs of the earlier examples gave way to cabriole legs, and these in turn were superseded, in the late eighteenth century, by straight, square legs. The dresser without legs, but with drawers and cupboards in the lower part, was also made throughout the eighteenth century. A good example, of about 1760, of this type, is shown in Fig. 13.

These dressers of the eighteenth century were generally of provincial and country make, for the farmhouse and village inn. They are therefore very seldom found in any other wood but oak, elm, apple, and yew, and are but rarely decorated with carving. The early ones of the Restoration period rely for their decoration on the turning of the legs and the moulded

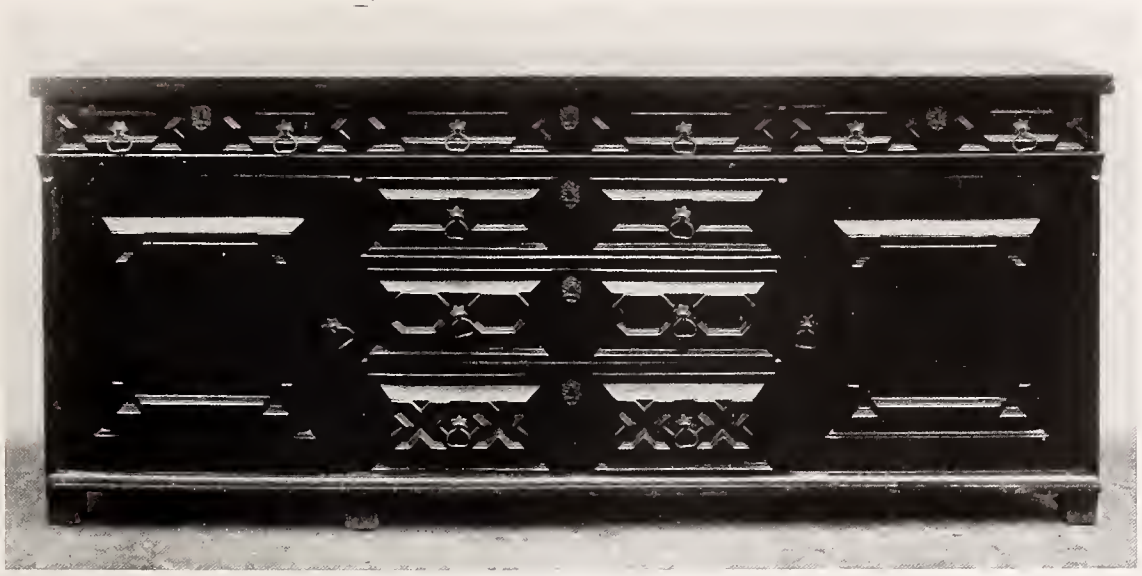
[1] The seventeenth century dresser with top part of shelves is very seldom met with.

panelling on the drawer fronts. The early eighteenth century examples are sometimes found with the knee of the cabriole leg decorated with a carved shell, and the apron, under the cornice moulding of the top part, shaped and pierced. On some specimens the corners of the lower portion are canted and decorated with a fret in the Chinese taste, denoting that they date from the second half of the eighteenth century, since this form of decoration was not in vogue before 1745. In an eighteenth century dresser of good quality the drawer fronts and cupboard doors were usually edged with a border of cross-banded mahogany veneer of about $\frac{3}{4}$ in. in width. For an example of a dresser showing a pierced and shaped apron under the cornice, canted fret corners decorated with Chinese fret, and drawer fronts cross-banded with veneer, see Fig. 13. The drawer fronts and cupboard doors of dressers of about 1780 are sometimes found inlaid with shells or stars in coloured woods according to the prevailing fashion.

The shelves should always be carefully examined, as many dressers, having lost their original shelves, have had them restored. These dressers of the eighteenth century and other articles of oak furniture of this period are invariably found to be of a much lighter colour than the oak pieces of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This difference in colour is mainly caused by the later oak furniture being polished or beeswaxed instead of being treated with linseed oil, as was the case with the earlier oak.

An oak Dresser, with shelves, standing on ogee bracket feet, edges of drawers cross-banded with mahogany veneer.
Circa 1760.

Fig. 13. Col. S.



An oak Dresser; fronts of drawers decorated with shaped panels of various design.
Circa 1690.

Fig. 14. Col. O.

CHAPTER IV

FURNITURE OF THE WALNUT PERIOD

1660–1735

HISTORICAL SURVEY

THE accession of Charles II. to the throne of England freed the social life of the country from the Puritanism of the preceding years. A reaction in favour of what was artistic and amusing immediately set in, and everything that had been condemned by the Puritan was now exalted by the reinstated Cavalier. As is invariably the case after Civil War, the arts and crafts of the country had fallen in abeyance and reflected, where they existed at all, the gloomy outlook of their originators. With the advent of "The Merry Monarch" the cropped hair gave way to flowing curls, broadcloth to lace and ruffles, the itinerant preacher to the strolling player, and the spirit of change laid its hand, also, upon furniture.

The new king and his courtiers whilst in exile both in Flanders and in France must have been influenced by the arts of those countries. On his arrival at Whitehall it was not long before Charles II. instituted changes in decoration and furnishing, making them more in accord with that to which he had been accustomed. Finding in this country no native talent for the changes he desired, he brought over artists and craftsmen from Holland and France. Thus it was that the beginnings of the new style were influenced by foreign taste which, radiating from the king's palaces and the mansions of his courtiers, gradually permeated the whole country to the exclusion of the previous English types.

Chairs, stools, and day-beds are the earliest articles showing the new fashion which exist to-day in any large numbers. This is accounted for by the fact that the new chairs and stools, having cane seats and backs, were far more comfortable than the former hard-seated chairs and benches of oak, and therefore were made in considerable numbers to meet the immediate

popular demand; while tables, cabinets, and chests-with-drawers were not made under the influence of the new taste and in the new fashionable walnut wood until 1675–80. These articles were veneered with walnut or inlaid with marquetry of various woods, both of which processes had no transitional phase in England: they appeared suddenly, being brought bodily from abroad by the Dutch craftsmen. At the same time, the French influence was accentuated to a great extent by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, which caused the emigration of Huguenot artisans and craftsmen in large numbers to Holland and England.

On the accession of William III. in 1689, the Dutch influence was increased and cemented, the growing commerce between the two countries being responsible for the importation of large quantities of Dutch furniture. With William III. came Daniel Marot, architect and designer. Marot, being a Huguenot, had fled from France in 1685 and entered the service of William of Orange before he became King of England. During this four years' sojourn in Holland the style of his work was modified by the Dutch environment, although it remained fundamentally in the French manner of Louis XIV. On his arrival in England he was appointed Architect to the King. In this capacity he also designed furniture and apartments. This furniture is a blending of the Dutch and the French styles, and there exist to-day chairs, stools, mirrors, and beds of his design.[1]

By 1702, when Queen Anne came to the throne, walnut had become the popular wood for better-class furniture, and oak furniture, which was now gradually adopting the line and form of the walnut, was being made only in the provinces and for the cheaper markets. Therefore most of the walnut furniture that has survived dates from the early eighteenth century, pieces of marquetry and walnut of earlier date than 1700 being to-day distinctly rare. This furniture of the Queen Anne period was simple and plain, without the richness of design which was characteristic of the walnut furniture of the preceding reigns. Marquetry became decadent in design and gradually went out of fashion.

This decline continued until about 1720, when furniture again became more ornate in character, owing in part to French influences and in part also to the introduction of mahogany. The salient feature of the new style was the decoration of the legs and arms of chairs and settees with the lion and satyr masks and eagle heads. Pieces of this period, both of walnut and of mahogany furniture, are found with this feature. Besides this type of

[1] Fine examples of his mirrors and beds are at Hampton Court Palace.

walnut furniture, the earlier and plainer type still persisted and in the provinces was made up to 1735 or even later.

COLOUR AND PATINA

The colour and patina of walnut furniture in a great measure account for the esteem in which furniture made of this wood is held by the collector at the present day. The colour of untouched pieces varies over a wide range from very dark nut-brown to a light brown of an almost grey shade, this being caused by the walnut having faded and become bleached by the sun.[1] Although preference of shade is really a matter of taste, yet of all the attractive colours in which walnut furniture is found to-day, the lighter hues are the more prized in veneered or marquetry furniture.[2] On the other hand, the most desirable colour in chairs, stools, and day-beds of the seventeenth century, which are made in the solid wood and rely for their decoration on carved ornament rather than on figure and grain, is a dark, rich brown. Untouched specimens of these pieces are invariably of this colour.

A great quantity of this walnut furniture was varnished, the varnish, which was transparent and of a very fine quality,[3] being applied when the piece was new.[4] On the other hand, although varnishing seems to have been the usual custom, many pieces are found to-day with their surfaces unvarnished, in which case they were most probably only lightly oiled and waxed.

The patina on pieces of untouched walnut furniture, when found to-day, varies considerably. On solid walnut, the patina is similar to that found on oak (see p. 22), except that oak is hard and walnut a soft wood. If the finger nail is pressed into the surface of walnut, it leaves a slight indentation, whereas if the same experiment is made with oak no result is visible.

[1] Low pieces, such as small chests-with-drawers and tables, are often found with light-toned tops, while the front and sides are dark in comparison. This has been caused by the piece of furniture standing in a window where the sun has bleached the top without reaching the front and sides.

[2] For pieces in this colour, see Figs. 31 and 47.

[3] In fact very similar to that used on violins.

[4] The varnish, which has already been noticed (p. 22) as having been applied to oak furniture at a date subsequent to its manufacture, may have been of the same quality as that found on walnut; in which case it is very probable that it was added, in this period, to oak of the preceding period.

It is only on carved walnut that the light and dark effect caused by the accumulation of dust is observed. No dust can adhere to the plain surfaces of the veneered pieces, except in the crevices of the mouldings. In fact it is a feature of some of the light colour walnut furniture that the wood appears almost bare, with only a thin coating of varnish to protect it.[1]

The effect of French polish on walnut is to cause the wood to become a yellow colour. The surface will have a high polish and in some cases the grain of the wood will be obscured.

DESIGN AND ORNAMENTATION

As already stated, the radical change in the design of English furniture when it began to be made in walnut was entirely due, directly and indirectly, to foreign influences. It is for this reason that the furniture of the Walnut period is complex and varied in its design and ornamentation.

In the case of chairs, stools, and day-beds of the earlier period, the spiral twist and baluster turning were the chief features of legs, stretchers, and uprights. The crestings and front stretchers of the chairs and day-beds were generally carved in the design of amorini supporting a crown, and the seats and backs were filled with panels of cane. The chairs of William and Mary's reign had upholstered seats, the backs either being decorated with elaborately carved splats or caning or else being upholstered, while the legs were turned and connected by serpentine stretchers centred by a finial in the middle where they joined.

The walnut chairs of the William and Mary period had their crestings placed on the top of the uprights, whilst the chairs of the Charles II. and James II. periods had the cresting between the uprights.[2]

The design of some of these walnut chairs so closely resembles that of the contemporary Dutch that in some cases it is hard to say to which country a chair belongs. The art of decorating furniture by marquetry was imported about 1675 from Holland, where it was much in vogue at this period. The earliest designs were floral in small panels, as in the clock case (Fig. 22). A few years later the floral design was used, not in panels, but completely covering the top of a table or the door of a clock

[1] As an example of this, the flap of the bureau W 88, 1910, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, should be examined.

[2] This is not invariable, but is a good general rule. Cf. the same distinction in oak chairs, p. 27.

as in the clock case (Fig. 23). The next variety that came into vogue was that known as "Seaweed" marquetry, or, as it is sometimes called, "Endive" marquetry. Another type of marquetry design is the "Arabesque," which consists of a design similar to the brass and tortoise-shell designs of Boulle : this, however, is generally found later than either of the floral or seaweed varieties. The earlier floral marquetry is most often found with the leaves of the design stained green ; while arabesque marquetry was not stained but shaded. This shading was done by the pieces of marquetry being laid in hot sand, which burnt and discoloured the surface of the wood.

Marquetry, to judge from examples surviving to-day, was generally used for decorating centre tables, clock cases, chests-with-drawers, mirror frames, cabinets on stands, writing-cabinets with "let-down" fronts, the early type of writing bureaux on legs, and bureaux with drawers. Seaweed marquetry is also occasionally found in small panels decorating the splats of walnut chairs of the time of Queen Anne. The articles in marquetry most frequently found to-day are the long case clocks and chests-with-drawers ; the centre table on twisted or baluster walnut legs, the mirror frame, and the writing cabinet or bureau are not so common. Another article of which great numbers must have been made and decorated with marquetry at this period is a flat box with a lid, sometimes called a lace box, generally measuring about 2 ft. by 18 in.

All these articles of furniture decorated with marquetry were much more extensively made in plain veneered walnut, and the article which is most abundant to-day is the bureau, sometimes with the top part (as in Fig. 31), but more often without. Bureaux on baluster legs (Fig. 44) and writing cabinets with let-down front (Fig. 50) were the first pieces of furniture in England that were specially designed for the purposes of writing. The bureau with the sloping front and drawers must have been made in considerable numbers from the time of William and Mary, and continued to be made throughout the eighteenth century in more or less the same form, altering only in its wood and decoration according to the prevailing fashion of each period.

This veneered walnut furniture relied for its decoration on the fine figure and grain of the wood. The veneer was applied in the form of panels surrounded by narrow bands of herring-bone or feather inlay and cross-banded edges. The decorative effect was also increased by well-defined mouldings, all of which were cross-banded.[1]

[1] Cross-banded : *i.e.* with the grain of the wood running across the length of the moulding.

One of the distinctive features of this period was the introduction of the cabriole leg for chairs, tables, and stands. It first appears in William and Mary's reign, in chairs showing French influence in their design, and generally terminated in a hoof or scroll foot (Fig. 21). But in the reign of Queen Anne it became bolder and ended in a club foot,[1] the knee often being carved with an escallop shell ornament, a favourite motif of this period. The club foot in its turn was succeeded by the claw and ball foot (Fig. 37).

With the advent of the cabriole leg and the club foot, the backs of chairs altered from the elaborately carved solid walnut of the preceding reign to the veneered hoop back with splat. This type of chair, sometimes known as the Hogarth chair, persisted in walnut until the introduction of mahogany about 1720, and after that date it was still made in both woods. It was the custom to make *en suite* with these chairs two-chair-back settees and stools, while occasionally three-chair-back settees were made. Other innovations in design which came into fashion about 1720 were the eagle and lion heads and the lion and satyr masks. Eagle and lion heads were often used as a form of decoration for terminating the ends of the arms of chairs and settees, and the lion and satyr mask was utilised for the decoration of the knee of the cabriole leg in place of the former shell.[2]

Pieces of walnut furniture with these carved motifs of decoration are of great rarity to-day, and when found are highly prized by the collector.

Pieces of furniture can be dated approximately by the beads and mouldings around or on the drawer fronts. The earliest type of drawer found in walnut furniture has a half-rounded, cross-banded beading applied on the carcase round the drawers (Fig. 50). This moulding dates from 1690 to 1705.[3] The next type is the double half-round beading on the carcase (Fig. 31). This dated from 1700 to 1715. In the third example the drawer front overlaps the carcase, concealing the crack between them (Fig. 38). This dates from 1715 to 1735. The last type is the cock bead surrounding the edge of the drawer front, which is generally found on mahogany and was used throughout the remainder of the eighteenth century. It therefore dates from 1735 to 1800 (Fig. 34).

[1] See Fig. 1.

[2] With the lion mask the lion paw foot is generally found instead of the claw and ball foot. See Fig. 46.

[3] These dates are of course only very approximate, for pieces were undoubtedly made, especially in the country, which considerably overlap the periods given. Country cabinetmakers were often working in styles that had long been discarded by their confrères in London and in the big towns.

WORKMANSHIP

It has already been mentioned that furniture of the Walnut period was veneered—that is to say, the walnut wood was cut into veneers and glued on to the surface of the carcase of a piece generally made in deal and oak.[1] This veneering was done on the flat surfaces and large shaped mouldings of the furniture. But in the Queen Anne period[2] chairs, stools, and settees would have their legs and arms made in the solid wood with the backs and seat rails veneered.

The bottoms of the drawers of pieces of walnut furniture are generally found with the grain of the wood running from back to front. It was not until later in the eighteenth century (about 1740) that the drawers were made with the grain running from side to side.

When applying the veneer to a piece of furniture the cabinetmaker would take speeial pains to adjust the figure of the veneer, so that it would be symmetrical. For instance, on the drawers of the bureau, Fig. 31, it will be seen that each long drawer is divided into two panels, the figure of the wood being identical in each. A careful matching of these veneers denotes a piece of high quality. The chest on stand (Fig. 38) also very clearly shows this feature. In pieces of inferior quality, the matching of the veneer was not taken so much into consideration.

Another feature of a piece of good quality is that the front and most prominent parts would be veneered with burr walnut, which is the veneer cut from the root of the tree. The sides of the piece, which are less important, would be veneered with walnut cut from the trunk. This, being cut with the grain and not across it, will show the grain in streaks on the surface of the veneer, as in Fig. 33, whereas burr walnut is cut across the grain, and, being from the root, will show a finely marked figure, as in Fig. 47.

Another favourite method of utilising the variation in the grain of walnut wood was by cutting the smaller branches of the tree transversely. The figure of the grain thus obtained was circular in form, and veneer cut in

[1] A bureau bookcase, for example, would have the top carcase made of oak, as the interior of this part would be exposed to view, while the carcase of the bottom portion would be made of deal, as this would be hidden by the drawers. The sides, backs, and bottoms of the drawers in a good quality piece would be made of oak, in a piece of inferior quality they would be of deal. This employment of two different woods for the making of the carcase was undoubtedly due to the question of cost, oak being more expensive than deal.

[2] Before this these articles, being decorated with carving, were made entirely in the solid walnut.

this manner was called "oyster-shell." This type of veneer was often made of laburnum wood for use in conjunction with marquetry, generally for the decoration of spaces between the inlaid panels (Fig. 22). This oyster-shell veneer was also very often used for decorating tables, cabinets, and chests with drawers during the late seventeenth century.

The mouldings were formed by applying a strip of walnut to a deal foundation, so that the grain was across the length, and then planing it to the required section.

The herring-bone or feather banding, which was extensively used as an edging to the panels of drawer fronts, table tops, etc., consisted of narrow bands of veneer cut on the slant ; these were set side by side, so that the grain met in the middle at an acute angle. Poor quality pieces of walnut furniture are not as a rule found decorated with this feather banding, but inlaid with a line of boxwood, a much cheaper method. The walnut veneer was generally about $\frac{1}{16}$ in. in thickness ; the burr walnut was, however, thicker, being sometimes as thick as $\frac{1}{8}$ in. These veneers were all saw-cut.

The woods used in marquetry were generally boxwood, holly, or sycamore. In the design of marquetry the inlay was either of light-coloured woods upon a dark background, or *vice versa*. Inlay of light woods upon a light background was seldom employed.

The collector will realise, even from the very brief description given above, the amount of care and labour that was devoted to the making and adornment of pieces of furniture of the Walnut period. He will also realise how examples of this furniture vary in quality, a knowledge essential for the proper understanding of those old pieces that exist to-day.

SPURIOUS WALNUT FURNITURE

Walnut furniture to-day is imitated, "improved," or adapted by the faker in all the four categories detailed in Chapter II, with the exception perhaps of category C. Most of the spurious pieces are those in category A —*i.e.* imitations of entirely new construction.

These pieces are made in the manner briefly described in Chapter II. They generally take the form of articles of a kind which are extremely rare in walnut furniture, such as the bureau on turned or twisted legs, the small 2 ft. bureau on stand, the walnut china cabinet, rare early card tables inlaid with panels of seaweed marquetry, marquetry centre tables on turned legs

with stretchers, and all articles which, if genuine, would to-day be worth considerable sums of money, as competition amongst collectors would be keen and prices would soar accordingly.

These imitations are made to supply a demand, as many people to-day who are desirous of furnishing a room entirely in walnut go in search of a walnut china cabinet, which is one of the rarest pieces of furniture of this period ; in fact, there are only a few genuine examples extant.

The explanation of the scarcity of these walnut cabinets with glazed doors is that, in the days of William and Mary and Queen Anne, it was not the fashion to display china in cabinets, but to place it on tables and over the chimney pieces, which were sometimes built up in tiers of varying heights, for the better display of the Oriental and Delft china so fashionable at this period. In the time of Queen Anne and later, niches with shelves were let into the walls of rooms specially for china ; so that, generally speaking, cabinets for china were not used. Hence the few genuine examples that survive to-day are of high value.

Bookcases also exist of this period, but are exceptionally rare, and the two or three earliest known specimens, which are of oak, are similar to the bookcases once belonging to Samuel Pepys, and now in the Pepys Library at Cambridge. Therefore, owing to the very small quantity of china cabinets and bookcases in walnut, the imitator has supplied the demand by spurious cabinets, the design, proportion, and ornamentation being entirely of his own conception. They generally have all the desirable and unusual features only found on rare specimens of walnut furniture, such as the double-domed top and the stand with turned cupped legs, connected by serpentine stretchers, and carved mouldings which he will invariably gild, as it is easier for him to obtain an appearance of age on a gilt surface than on that of wood.

Another article in constant demand, which the imitator readily supplies, is the walnut cheval glass to match the walnut furniture in a Queen Anne bedroom. The earliest known genuine example of a cheval glass dates from about 1785, and was invented by a designer of that period ; it is therefore impossible to obtain a genuine cheval glass of walnut wood of the time of Queen Anne.

Among other imitations in walnut are those of the rare examples with the lion masks carved on the knees of the legs and the paw feet, similar to the card table and settee shown in Figs. 45 and 46. These imitations take the form of settees, armchairs, and especially stools. In comparison with

genuine specimens they are over-ornamented with carving and are ponderous and vulgar in appearance. In this type of imitation the chairs and settees are often made with upholstered backs, with the legs and arms only of walnut. By carrying out the design in this manner, the imitator has less surface to patinate, whereas, if the back was also in wood, it would increase the cost and add considerably to his labour. He obtains the appearance of age on these pieces with French polish, stain, and wax, in the manner already mentioned.

In these imitations of new construction, the underframing of the seat should be carefully examined. A genuine chair or stool will have this underframing made of beech, from about an inch up to two inches in thickness ; the beech will be unpolished and only darkened in colour by age, the rails will be nicely finished and not rough in appearance ; in some cases, however, the imitations will have the seat rails much thicker and roughly hewn as a supposed sign of age. Any indication of a white mould or bloom on this underframing is due to the working out of the soda with which the wood has been treated to acquire the right colour of age. In these imitations the figure of the walnut wood—which is so important a feature in the genuine piece—will be obscured and hidden by the stain and polish applied to it. This is very noticeable in pieces with veneered surfaces. As already mentioned in Chapter III on oak, these spurious pieces in many cases lose their appearance of age in the course of seven or eight years. This applies also to spurious walnut furniture, and what is then specially noticeable is that the wood has a tendency to change its colour after a time and become a light yellow.

A very useful test can be applied to chairs and settees with splat backs. In the genuine old piece, the splat where it joins the back seat rail is kept in position by a shoe piece, which is glued on to the top of the rail. On examining the chair from behind, it can be seen that the seat rail and the shoe are two different pieces of wood, and the line where they join can be distinctly seen. The imitator does not go to this trouble, but makes his shoe and seat rail all in one piece, thus saving cost and labour. Sometimes he will gouge a line across the seat rail at the back so as to imitate the joint, but generally he does not even take the trouble to do this. *Chairs and settees, therefore, with the seat rail and shoe in one should be viewed with strong suspicion.* This test refers not only to walnut furniture, but to mahogany furniture and all chairs made in the eighteenth century with the splat joining the seat rail.

Sometimes the imitator, in making spurious pieces with drawers, will

copy the drawer of the early seventeenth century, with the runner grooved in the drawer side, but genuine pieces of walnut furniture will hardly ever be found with the runners of the drawers made in this manner. It was a method that had gone out of fashion before walnut furniture started to be made.

Several examples of imitations according to categories B and D will be shown in the following notes on the various articles of walnut furniture.

Chairs, Stools, and Day-beds. 1660–1700.—A very large quantity of these must originally have been made, as owing to their fragile construction and the fact that they are made in walnut wood, so liable to the ravages of the worm, very many must have perished in the course of time ; yet a large number are still in existence.

Of the chairs a large number of single ones exist in proportion to the number of armchairs. Originally they were undoubtedly made in sets, but to-day anything like a complete set of chairs is very seldom met with. The armchair is naturally of considerably more value than the single, and the day-bed, which is rarer than either, is still more highly prized. Examples with spiral twist stretchers, legs, and uprights are more desirable to-day than the later ones in which the baluster turning has taken the place of the spiral twist.

The degrees of quality in the carving of the cresting and the front stretchers and the turning of the spiral twists are considerable. For an example of a chair of good quality, the one in the Victoria and Albert Museum, which is illustrated (Fig. 18), should be examined. In the inferior specimens the cresting and front stretcher are not pierced through but are decorated with shallow carving. In addition to examples found in walnut, a quantity of furniture, mostly single chairs and stools, has survived, made in beech. The reason for the manufacture of these was undoubtedly because they could be made more cheaply, beech being a less expensive wood than walnut. Unlike the walnut furniture it was painted black, instead of being left in the natural wood. For examples of this type see the chair and stool illustrated (Figs. 42 and 25). Naturally pieces of beech furniture are of considerably less value to-day than those made in walnut.

Chairs of the William and Mary period with elaborately carved backs are very scarce, and are generally of greater value than those of the Charles II. period. This especially refers to the chairs showing the influence

of Daniel Marot in their design (Figs. 19 and 21). These are sometimes met with in pairs or small sets of four or six. The armchair of this type is especially prized; indeed, judging from its scarcity to-day, only a very few can have been made. Stools[1] similar to these chairs are also extremely scarce.

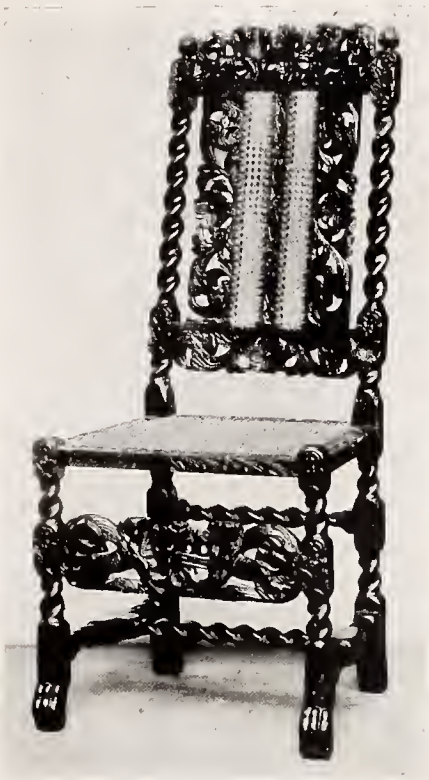
The chair with the upholstered back and seat dating from the William and Mary period is also met with to-day, but generally the legs and stretchers are of painted beech and not of walnut. The same refers to the early wing armchair, as an early specimen in walnut of the William and Mary period is a rarity. Couches with upholstered backs of this period are by far the most uncommon articles of upholstered furniture; few specimens exist, and these in most cases belong to the descendants of those for whom they were originally made. They have elaborately carved walnut stretchers and legs, and the seat and backs are sometimes covered in Genoese velvet.

The majority of these chairs, stools, and day-beds are to-day in a more or less restored state. The part most usually found restored in the chairs is the front carved stretcher, which, owing to its position, has been broken and lost. Many armchairs, too, have a new arm. Special care, therefore, should be taken in examining these parts. The seat rails and subsidiary turned stretchers are also often found to have been restored; but these naturally do not affect the value of a chair so much as a new arm or new front stretcher. This also applies to the caning, which is very seldom found in its original state.[2]

These chairs, stools, and day-beds are not extensively reproduced to-day by the imitator, with the exception of some examples in beech. This furniture being painted, its surface can be copied and made to look old much more easily than the patinated surface of the walnut wood. The imitator generally confines his copies to the wing armchair with turned legs and elaborately carved front stretcher or serpentine stretcher and the couch with high upholstered back. To add to their semblance of age, these pieces are often upholstered in old damask or such-like material. The single chair and stool, being less saleable articles, are not so frequently imitated. A number of stools with twisted legs and two carved stretchers have been made up from the front legs and stretchers of two single Charles II. chairs, the backs of which have been broken beyond repair. The type of stool with cane seat of the Charles II. period, when original, is rarer to-day than most other

[1] See Fig. 27.

[2] Old caning will be brittle, whilst the modern caning is soft and pliable, with its newness toned down by staining.

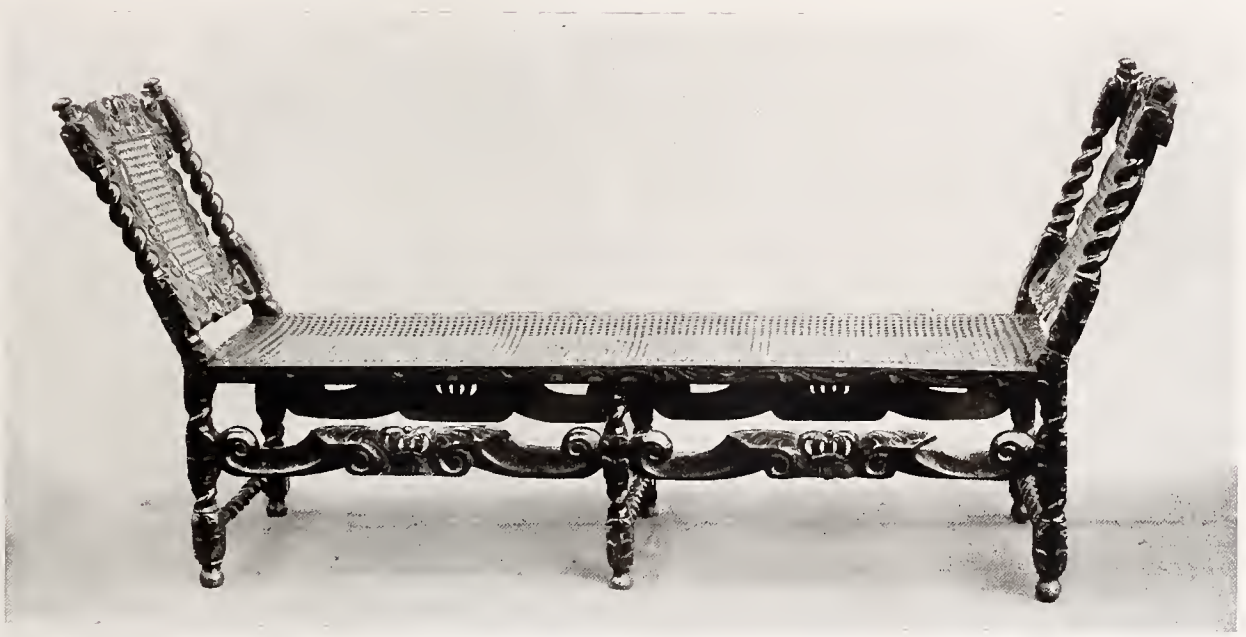


A walnut Chair.
Circa 1675.

Fig. 15. Col. M.

A walnut Chair, with twisted spiral legs, stretchers, and uprights.
Circa 1658.

Fig. 16. Col. M.



A walnut Day Bed with two backs.
Circa 1675.

Fig. 17. Col. Q.

A very fine walnut Armchair of the Restoration period. The crouching lions on the arms are very unusual. This chair is said to have been made originally for Nell Gwyn, and until recent years was in the possession of her descendants.

Circa 1670.

Fig. 18. Col. R.

A walnut Chair in the style of Daniel Marot. (This chair is one of a set of four.)
Circa 1690.

Fig. 19. Col. L.

A walnut Chair, with finely carved back and stretcher, showing Dutch influence.
Circa 1680.

Fig. 20. Col. M.

A walnut Chair, with early cabriole leg, ending in scroll toe, in the style of Daniel Marot. (This chair is one of a set of four.)
Circa 1695.

Fig. 21. Col. L.

types of seventeenth century stools, which are found, generally, in painted beech and not in walnut.

Sometimes these chairs with spiral twist legs and carved crestings will be found in oak; these are either modern imitations or made about 1860, when a considerable amount of oak furniture stained black was made, based on the design of the chairs of the Restoration period. They were not imitations meant to deceive, but the revival of an old design. The resemblance is only slight, as they are by no means faithful copies like the imitations made at the present day; but some of these 1860 chairs, during the last fifty or sixty years, have obtained a certain appearance of age, and therefore it is quite possible for the uninitiated to mistake them for those of the Stuart period.

Chairs, Stools, and Settees. 1700–1735.—Most of these extant to-day are of the plain type with the cabriole leg ending in a club foot. Examples with the carved cabriole leg and the claw and ball foot have survived in fewer numbers, and these, from the point of view of the collector, are naturally the most desirable, especially the armchair and two-chair-back settee. The chairs were undoubtedly made originally in sets consisting of six, eight, or ten single chairs with two or four armchairs, but to-day it is seldom that a set of more than six single chairs is found intact. Unfortunately a great number of these chairs and settees with the hoop back are found with their surfaces French polished.

The quality of the carving and the figure of the grain of walnut veneer varies considerably. In fine examples, the backs in many cases will be found veneered with burr walnut, although, more often, plain walnut veneer would be used for this purpose. Many examples will also be found with their backs in the solid wood; these generally are not of such good quality. The quality of the carving is especially noticeable in the execution of the claw and ball foot. In a fine example similar to that shown on the front legs of the chair, Fig. 63, it will be seen that the claw has a firm grip of the ball and the curve of the leg is graceful and definite. In a poor specimen the cabriole leg will be clumsy and ill-defined, and when it terminates in a claw and ball foot the latter will have a pinched and mean appearance out of all proportion to the leg. The claws are sometimes found webbed, this undesirable feature, however, being in the main peculiar to Irish mahogany furniture.

As already mentioned, walnut chairs, stools, and settees with the knees of the legs decorated with lion masks are of very great rarity, although

within recent years the number of existing examples has been considerably augmented by the imitator. The plainer type of walnut chair and settee has also been extensively copied, especially the latter, which, as previously pointed out, is a piece of furniture much in demand to-day. The arms of these spurious settees are often decorated with an eagle's head, as this is a salient feature of the genuine piece. In order to enhance the value of plain walnut armchairs, also, the imitator carves the ends of the arms with eagle's heads; as, however, the supply of these armchairs is to-day by no means plentiful, it is the corner armchair, which exists in far greater numbers, that is generally chosen for this treatment. It is generally possible to detect when this feature has been added to the chair, because the imitator has been unable to reproduce the worn appearance of the original eagle head, which, owing to its position on the arm, will have been subjected to constant handling which will have worn away the sharp edges.

The corner or writing armchair was a very favourite one in the eighteenth century and exists in large numbers to-day. Sometimes it was made with another splat fitted on to the back, as in Fig. 40. This type is called a barber's chair, as the high back formed a rest for the head during shaving. Walnut barber's chairs are rare to-day, those extant being generally of country make, in either elm, oak, or cherry wood.

The favourite covering for the upholstered seats and backs of the chairs and settees of this period was needlework. Owing, however, to its delicate nature few examples are found to-day with their original coverings. Many old chairs and settees have had their seats and backs upholstered in modern needlework, the difference between the old and new being very apparent, as the original is thin in texture with a smooth and even surface, whilst the reproduction is thick, and in places lumpy. This modern needlework is also anæmic in colour, whereas the old is often bright and fresh-looking.

Writing Tables and Writing Cabinets.—The earliest form of bureau was on legs similar to those shown in Fig. 44, and is a particularly rare piece of furniture.

The later type with drawers underneath has survived in considerable numbers in walnut, both with and without the top part. The latter is known as the bureau bookcase. These bureaux and bureau bookcases were made in varying widths, the usual type measuring 3 ft. 6 in., whilst the narrowest and rarest type measures 2 ft. or under (Fig. 36). In the bureau bookcase the cupboard doors of the top part have their panels generally

A long case Night Clock, inlaid with floral marquetry in panels. Very rare movement by Edward East, London.

Circa 1685.

Fig. 22. Col. T.

A very rare Grandmother Clock; case inlaid with floral marquetry. Eight-day movement by Christopher Gould, London.

Circa 1700.

Fig. 23. Col. N.

A long case Clock, decorated in black and gold English lacquer.

Circa 1740.

Fig. 24. Col. M.

A painted beech Stool.
Circa 1680.

Fig. 25. Col. M.

A walnut Stool.
Circa 1695.

Fig. 26. Col. C.

A walnut Stool, in the style of Daniel Marot.
Circa 1700.

Fig. 27. Col. C.

A walnut Stool.
Circa 1725.

Fig. 28 Col. C.

fitted with old Vauxhall mirror plates with bevelled edges, which add greatly to the decorative effect of this piece of furniture. Many bureau bookcases, however, were made with veneered walnut panels to the doors instead of the mirrors, in order, no doubt, to lessen the cost, as glass at this period was very expensive. Needless to say, the presence of these mirrors adds considerably to the value of a bureau bookcase ; therefore many examples originally made with the wooden panels have had them replaced by mirrors. These new mirrors are generally plain without bevelled edges, but if their edges are bevelled the new bevelling will be entirely different from the old. This subject of old and new bevelling on mirrors is more fully described in Chapter VI.

The most valuable type of these bureau bookcases is the very narrow one, especially if the top part has two doors instead of one, which is the more usual. The value of these pieces to-day depends on the importance of the design ; those with a straight top and mirror panels with square instead of shaped tops are much more plentiful and less valuable than the examples with the broken arch or double dome (Fig. 31).

The interest and value of these bureau bookcases is increased by a cross-banded ogee moulding around the bottom part just above the drawers, as this is only found in the early examples, or by the bottom part having cupboards with doors instead of the more usual drawers, or if the top part is fitted with small drawers, pigeon-holes, and compartments, as shown in the mahogany example, Fig. 83.

In most walnut bureaux there is a well in the centre of the writing space, which is closed by a sliding top. This is a feature which is peculiar to the walnut bureau, as in the later mahogany examples the space of this well is taken up by drawers. Both the bureau and the bureau bookcase are sometimes found with a knee-hole. This peculiarity is more often met with in the bureau, but is extremely rare. Another kind of bureau is the small one on a stand with legs, about 2 ft. in width, similar to the three examples illustrated (Figs. 32, 33, and 34). The stands of these small bureaux vary in design according to the fashion of the period in which they were made.

All the walnut bureaux of this type that have survived to-day are of very good workmanship, showing that they were expensive pieces originally and only made for the well-to-do. Hence to-day they are very scarce and valuable.

As already stated, this small bureau is a piece of furniture which the faker delights to imitate, usually in the early form with the turned cupped legs and flat stretchers.

Another type of writing cabinet is one with a let-down front, similar to the example illustrated in lacquer (Fig. 50). In plain veneered walnut these cabinets are not to-day valued so highly, most probably because they are ill adapted for practical use, but being of an earlier date than the bureau bookcase, the early examples are sometimes found decorated with floral or seaweed marquetry. From the design of examples extant to-day, they would appear to have been made not later than 1720.

The flat-top walnut pedestal writing table, with a knee-hole and drawers, was an article of furniture made in very small numbers in the Walnut period, and most of the examples extant date towards the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth century. They are generally of large dimensions with drawers on two sides ; the tops were not veneered, but covered with leather or sometimes velvet. Another type of writing table with a flat top was one on legs, a very fine example of which is in Kensington Palace. This table has double scroll legs connected by flat stretchers, and dates from the period of William and Mary. The top is covered with green silk velvet.

Another pedestal knee-hole table with drawers, found in walnut, is the small table with a top generally measuring about 3 ft. by 2 ft. As these tables have veneered walnut tops, they were probably originally intended for dressing tables and not for writing tables. Considerable numbers of them must have been made in the early eighteenth century, as many examples have survived. Besides this table there is another small type, on cabriole legs generally with three drawers, which also exists to-day in large numbers. This is generally found with plain cabriole legs ending in club feet, but sometimes examples are found with carved cabriole legs and claw and ball feet, which naturally are of much greater interest and value.

Bookcases and China Cabinets.—Attention has already been drawn to the great rarity of the china cabinet and bookcase in walnut ; therefore the collector must always look askance at those specimens which he comes across. A type of walnut bookcase of which a certain number is found to-day dates from about 1725. It has glazed doors of rectangular panes set in heavy bars. The bottom, which contains drawers, is low in proportion to the upper part. These walnut bookcases were not made with more than two doors, as the bookcase with the centre and two wings did not come into fashion until later in the century.

The earliest cabinets are those with solid doors, generally inlaid with floral or seaweed marquetry, supported by a stand with spiral twist or baluster

A walnut Card Table. The centre back leg pulls out to support the folding top.
Circa 1715.

Fig. 29. Col. P.

A Card Table, decorated in black and gold English lacquer.
Circa 1700.

Fig. 30. Col. L.

A Bureau Writing Cabinet, overlaid with burr walnut veneer.
Circa 1715.

Fig 31. Col. V.

A Bureau veneered with burr walnut.
Circa 1710.

Fig. 32. Col. C.

A Bureau veneered with walnut.
Circa 1725.

Fig. 33. Col. C.

A Bureau veneered with burr walnut.
Circa 1735.

Fig. 34. Col. C.

A mahogany Bureau.
Circa 1740.

Fig. 35. Col. C.

A narrow Bureau Writing Cabinet, overlaid with walnut veneer.
Circa 1705.

Fig. 36. Col. Q.

A walnut Chair, with back and seat rail overlaid with burr walnut veneer.
Circa 1720.

Fig. 37. Col. C.

legs with flat stretchers. They will also be found veneered with oyster-shell of walnut, lignum vitæ, or laburnum wood. The interiors of these cabinets generally contain a number of small drawers of various sizes, the fronts of the drawers being decorated similarly to the exterior of the cabinet.

This type of cabinet on a stand dates from about 1685 to the first years of the eighteenth century, and when found to-day on its original stand is a particularly valuable piece. Unfortunately, however, many of the stands, owing to their fragile construction, have been destroyed, and the majority of these cabinets when met with to-day are mounted on modern stands.

This type of cabinet was also made with a bottom part composed of drawers. It rather resembles in this form the writing cabinet with let-down front, already described, except that the two doors take the place of the front of the other. As this in no way approaches in value the cabinet on stand, the imitator often mounts the upper portion of these cabinets on spurious stands with spiral twist or baluster turned legs.

Tables and Card Tables.—A most desirable table of the Walnut period is that with the top measuring about 3 ft. by 2 ft., generally with a drawer in one of the long sides, and supported on spiral twist or baluster turned legs connected by flat stretchers. This type of table, the earliest of which dates from about 1675, is found sometimes inlaid with marquetry of floral or seaweed design, sometimes veneered with oyster-shell veneer of walnut or laburnum woods, but generally veneered with plain walnut. Genuine specimens are seldom found to-day in perfect condition, the tops and stretchers often being defective.

Spurious specimens of this type of table are numerous, especially those decorated with marquetry. They are generally of new construction throughout, the carcase, drawers, and stretchers being made of old deal, and the legs turned out of solid walnut.

This type of table in marquetry must not be confused with the Dutch examples. The English table is light and delicate in appearance, whereas the Dutch is larger, with heavy, massive legs and stretchers. The tops of these Dutch tables are also thicker, and ivory is more often introduced into the marquetry.

The earliest card tables are of the William and Mary period, similar to the example in lacquer shown in Fig. 30. The top was circular when open, and the legs were turned and connected either by stretchers or a base board. Only a few specimens of this early type of table have survived.

The card table of Queen Anne's reign had the circular top and the cabriole leg, but no stretchers (Fig. 29). The next type had a square top and the cabriole leg ending either in the claw and ball or club foot, similar in shape to the example with the knees decorated with lion masks shown in Fig. 45.

Walnut card tables are to-day hard to find, especially with their original patina, as so many have had their surfaces French polished. A feature which adds to their value is that the folding flap is sometimes supported by the two back legs, in which case the card table when open will have a leg at each corner; this is known as the "Concertina movement." Generally these card tables are found with the folding top supported by one leg, which is hinged on to the framework of the table. Other points of value are seen when shallow wells for counters are let into the top and the corners are fitted with circular places for the candlesticks; and when the back and front legs are the same.[1]

The top of the walnut card table was invariably covered originally with green silk velvet trimmed with narrow gold braid on the edge and fastened in position by small gilt-headed nails. A few very rare examples have survived with their tops covered in *gros* or *petit point* needlework. The design of these needlework covers is either floral or a landscape scene, or else a design of playing cards.

Chests-with-Drawers, Double Chests, and Dressing Tables.—The chest-with-drawers, sometimes with a stand and sometimes without, was a piece of furniture of which the earliest specimens date from about 1680. These early chests with drawers are generally decorated with marquetry and are the most usual pieces of marquetry furniture found to-day. Of much greater rarity, however, is the chest-with-drawers *on stand*, especially the early examples in marquetry. In these chests the top is inlaid with marquetry as well as the front and sides, the earlier specimens with the floral design and the later with the seaweed variety.

The early examples on stands have three legs with spiral twist or baluster turning in front and two behind connected by the flat stretcher of the period, the stands generally having a shallow drawer fitted just above the legs. The stands of the William and Mary period have four turned legs in front instead of three, and in the early eighteenth century the chests on stands became higher and the turned legs and stretchers gave way to cabriole legs (Fig. 38).

[1] Many card tables were made with claw and ball feet on the front legs but with plain club feet on the back.

A Chest on stand of veneered walnut.
Circa 1720.

Fig. 38. Col. L.

A Corner Cupboard of veneered burr walnut, with broken arched top. (These arched tops were also frequently used on Bureau Bookcases and Tallboys of the walnut period.)
Circa 1720.

Fig. 39. Col. Q.

A corner Armchair; splats and seat rail overlaid with burr walnut veneer.
Circa 1730.

Fig. 40. Col. C.

An elm Writing Chair of exceptional design, with five legs; back and seat rail overlaid with elm veneer.
Circa 1740.

Fig. 41. Col. C.

A painted beech Armchair.
Circa 1690.

Fig. 42. Col. Q.

A mahogany Winged Armchair, upholstered in *petit point* needlework.
Circa 1735.

Fig. 43. Col. C.

A Bureau of veneered walnut on baluster-turned legs; the two front centre legs swing forward to support the writing flap.
Circa 1690.

Fig. 44. Col. E.

A walnut Card Table of the lion mask period, with serpentine front.
Circa 1735.

Fig. 45. Col. C.

A walnut Settee of the lion mask period. (This Settee is one of a pair in existence, and they most probably formed part of an important walnut set of furniture consisting of settees, chairs, and stools.)
Circa 1730.

Fig. 46

Col. C.

A Dressing Table of veneered burr walnut, with pilasters of solid walnut, carved and fluted; the top lifts up, enclosing toilet mirror and fitments.
Circa 1735.

Fig. 47. Col. C.

CHESTS WITH DRAWERS, DOUBLE CHESTS, ETC.

Unfortunately, the chest on a stand, in perfect condition, is to-day very difficult to obtain. The heavy weight of the chest damages and breaks the slender legs of the stand, so that most of those that have survived have their legs either missing or restored. In many cases they are found with the stand resting on the floor without the legs, and sometimes the chests with four turned legs in front will have been restored with cabriole legs, thus having two legs in front instead of four. The collector, therefore, should subject these stands to careful examination.

A considerable number of these chests-with-drawers must have been made, like the bureau and small dressing tables already mentioned, for they exist to-day in larger numbers than any other pieces of walnut furniture. Chests on stands must have been made in walnut up to about 1735, at which time they were also made in mahogany.[1]

The walnut dressing table, as opposed to the small knee-hole pedestal table and the table with three drawers on cabriole legs, is a piece of furniture of great rarity. An example of a walnut dressing table is illustrated (Fig. 47). The top of this table lifts up, disclosing a large toilet mirror and sunk compartments for the necessary articles of toilet. The imitator, in order to meet the demand for walnut dressing tables to-day, generally makes them either of entirely new construction or utilises the stand of a chest-with-drawers, to which he adds carved cabriole legs or legs of some other rare type. As the top of the stand will not be veneered with walnut, he adds a new veneered top. By this adaptation he makes use of the old carcase and drawers of the original stand, thus making detection of his spurious piece more difficult.

Double chests-with-drawers, or tallboys as they are more commonly called, began to be made in walnut about the end of Queen Anne's reign. The finest specimens that exist to-day have the broken arch top, similar to the corner cupboard, Fig. 39. But this is very unusual, straight moulded cornices being more common. Another feature which adds to the value of these pieces is that sometimes the bottom drawer is made with a concave shell or niche, inlaid with a star design. The front corners of the top part, and sometimes the bottom part, are canted and decorated with fluting. These double chests-with-drawers of the more ordinary design are in less demand to-day than the chest with stand, partly owing no doubt to the difficulty of placing them elsewhere than in a bedroom for which they were originally intended.

[1] Several of them made in this wood are extant.

CHAPTER V

LACQUER FURNITURE

I

THE art of lacquering, which was first invented by the Japanese, is of very early origin, as it is mentioned in their writings as far back as the fourth century. The earliest records of lacquer work in England are found in inventories dating from the time of Elizabeth, in which are mentioned such articles as Indian cabinets, which was the name given at that time to Oriental lacquer cabinets. It was not until the reign of Charles II.,[1] however, that lacquer cabinets and screens first began to be imported in any number into this country from the East.

These importations of lacquer work into England and Holland soon caused craftsmen to start imitating it and extending its use to other articles of furniture. The new craft very soon became extremely popular, not only as an industry, but as an occupation for the wealthy classes. In fact, "japanning," as it was then called, became so fashionable a pursuit that a book entitled *A Treatise on Japanning and Varnishing*, by John Stalker and George Parker, written as a guide to the amateur and giving many recipes for lacquering and gilding, was published in 1688. This imitation lacquer was, however, very different in appearance from the Oriental, which was made from the resin of gum trees, the finished surface being smooth and hard with a high polish. The European variety was more in the nature of paint and varnish, and lacked the hard lustrous appearance of the original.

It is with this lacquer, made either in England or Holland, that most of the lacquer furniture extant to-day is decorated. Oriental lacquer pieces are not so often come across, although in the late seventeenth century a very large amount of lacquer furniture was imported into this country; this was specially made for the English market, and designs of English articles of furniture were sent to the East to be executed with lacquer decoration.

[1] There is a record that Charles II. possessed two "Jappan Cabinets" for which the sum of £100 was paid. These undoubtedly formed part of the new furniture bought for his palace at Whitehall.

A Cabinet, decorated in English black and gold lacquer, on carved wood and silvered stand, showing Italian and French influences. *Circa* 1680.

Fig. 48. Col. D.

A Cabinet, decorated in English black and gold lacquer, on carved wood and silvered stand, in the style of Daniel Marot. *Circa* 1695.

Fig. 49. Col. D.

LACQUER FURNITURE

The only examples of English lacquer that have come down to us in any considerable number from the reign of Charles II. are the square cabinets mounted on elaborately carved wood and gilt stands. One of the finest examples extant is the cabinet dating from the last half of Charles II.'s reign, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. The rendering of the design is bold and Oriental in character, but has a distinct European feeling—a characteristic most noticeable in the earlier specimens of English work. Another feature of the early work was the introduction into the design of various colours, such as greens and reds; for instance, on the cabinet mentioned above, a very true copy of the green found in *famille verte* china has been reproduced on the plumage of the birds and in the flowers. In earlier work a far larger portion of the design is in relief than is the case in later examples. This raised portion of the design was formed of composition, which was applied on to the surface. The design on the later examples is much more detailed and finished, and a closer imitation of the Oriental work, as can be seen from the cabinets illustrated (Figs. 48 and 49).

Judging from the examples that have survived, lacquer cabinets date from the last years of Charles II. till about 1730. The earlier ones were mounted on carved wood and gilt or silvered stands, whilst the eighteenth century examples, which generally had their stands lacquered, were sometimes made with turned legs connected by stretchers, but more often with cabriole legs. The earliest examples in lacquer that have survived of such pieces of furniture as the bureau bookcase, the chest-with-drawers, and the table, date from the last years of William and Mary's reign. All this seventeenth century lacquer furniture is, however, extremely rare, as the majority of what is extant dates from the first thirty years of the eighteenth century.

II

The following are the most usual articles found in English lacquer to-day:

Cabinets on gilt, silvered, gesso, or lacquered stand.[1]
Writing Cabinets with fall-down fronts.
Chests-with-Drawers with and without stands.
Chests.
Corner Cupboards.

[1] Sometimes lacquer cabinets are found mounted on chests-with-drawers.

Bureaux and Bureau Bookcases and small Bureaux on stands with legs.
Toilet Glasses.
Card Tables and Writing Tables.
Small pedestal Dressing Tables, and also small Tables on cabriole legs with three drawers.
Long Case, Bracket, and Wall Clocks.
Chairs.
Mirrors and Picture Frames and early eighteenth century Barometers.

All these are exactly similar in shape and design to the contemporary walnut furniture, with the exception of the cabinet on stand. Long case clocks have survived in the largest numbers ; next to this are the chests-with-drawers and the cabinets on lacquered stands, the bureau bookcases, the bracket and wall clocks, toilet mirrors, and corner cupboards. The remaining articles are much rarer, especially cabinets on gilt, silvered, or gesso stands, chairs, writing tables, and card tables.

III

Lacquering was done on grounds of various colours, and from examples extant to-day it can be seen that black, red, green, blue, and buff were most frequently used. Examples with a black ground are to-day by far the most common ; green and blue grounds are occasionally found. The red ground is still rarer ; but examples in buff colour are by far the rarest of any—in fact, only a few genuine examples are known to exist.

Lacquer furniture went out of fashion about 1730, and the only articles that appear to have been made in any quantity after this date were clock cases.

About 1750, when the Chinese taste again came into vogue, lacquering revived, but as examples of this later lacquer work are scarce it could not have been so popular. The leading cabinetmakers of this period, such as Thomas Chippendale, mention, in the pattern books which they published of their designs, the fact that certain of these designs would be suitable for "japanning."

A writing Cabinet with fall-down flap; decorated in black and gold English lacquer. (This type of writing cabinet is frequently found of walnut and sometimes of marquetry. It was the popular form of writing cabinet before the introduction of the bureau bookcase.)

Circa 1700.

Fig. 50. Col. L.

LACQUER FURNITURE

GENUINE AND SPURIOUS LACQUER

The collector who wishes to purchase genuine pieces of old English lacquer furniture will find many pitfalls in his way. Lacquer furniture, unlike oak and walnut, has not been improved by the course of time, and untouched pieces in good condition are very scarce and hard to find. In such pieces the gilt design stands out brilliantly against the dark background, and any touches of colour will also show up and add to the decorative effect. This brilliancy of the untouched piece is well exemplified by the pieces illustrated. Unfortunately many examples are found in a very dilapidated state. Sometimes the surface of the lacquer will be scratched and dented, but more often the piece will be thickly coated with mastic varnish, which in bad cases will have so hidden the design that only the raised portions of it are left. Pieces in this condition do not serve any decorative purpose, and although this varnish can be removed by a skilled workman, the result is never satisfactory nor in any way comparable with the appearance of a piece in its original condition.

There are also many pieces which are to-day in a more or less restored state ; not only in the restoration of the lacquer surface, but, in such pieces as the chest-with-drawers on stand, with the stands[1] either entirely new or very much restored. The collector will therefore realise how important it is carefully to examine each piece, as the amount of restoration it has received will naturally affect its value.

Besides these restored pieces of genuine lacquer furniture, the collector will come across many pieces of an entirely spurious nature. These will sometimes take the form of old pieces of furniture enhanced in value by modern lacquering. The articles generally chosen for this purpose include the oak chest-with-drawers, the oak long case clock, and the oak or mahogany tripod table. These pieces being numerous and quite plain in character are considerably increased in value by being converted into lacquer examples.

Besides this lacquering of old pieces, there is a large quantity of lacquer furniture made to-day of entirely new construction. For instance, the rare lacquer cabinet on carved wood and gilt stand, of the time of Charles II., is extensively reproduced. The imitator makes these spurious cabinets as attractive as possible, decorating them in all the rare colours of the old lacquer, especially the red and the buff. In order to add to their appear-

[1] The remarks made about walnut chests on stands in Chapter IV refer also to the lacquer examples.

ance he will sometimes lacquer the outside of a cabinet buff and the interior blue. In genuine examples this is never found, as the inside of a cabinet was always the same colour as the exterior. The stand of the cabinet will be copied from the rare and elaborately carved gilt stand of the seventeenth century.

Another method by which the imitator makes spurious examples of these seventeenth century cabinets is by mounting genuine early eighteenth century lacquer cabinets, of which a large number exist to-day with their original lacquer stands either lost or in bad condition, on spurious stands of seventeenth century design. Sometimes these spurious stands will take the form of gilt stands[1] with cabriole legs elaborately carved with satyr masks. The imitator will also make copies of such pieces as the small bureau on stand, the card table, the china cabinet, and all such articles which are hardly ever met with to-day in genuine lacquer.

The following notes concerning the appearance of genuine old lacquer may prove of use to the collector.

The lacquered surface of a piece of furniture, through constant rubbing and dusting, over a long period, will have the gilding on the raised portions of the design worn away, showing the composition[2] ground underneath. Parts of a piece which have been constantly handled, such as a cupboard door, or the edge of the flap of a bureau, will show the lacquering worn away, and in many cases the bare wood of the carcase will be exposed. Another characteristic of genuine lacquer is that, owing to its surface being soft, the lacquer, even in a piece in fine condition, will, on careful examination, show a number of small indentations and scratches. These are especially noticeable under the key-holes of the flap and the doors to the upper part of a bureau bookcase. These scratches and indentations will have been caused by the former owners, in locking and unlocking the cabinet, having used a key on a bunch which knocked against the surface of the lacquer.[3] These marks are sometimes noticeable on walnut pieces; the test, however, is generally applicable only to articles like the bureau and the writing table, which would frequently be locked by a key on a bunch, and not to the door of a long case clock, where the key, being infrequently used, would in most cases be left in the lock.

[1] For the detection of a spurious gilt stand of this description, several notes in the next chapter will be found of practical value.

[2] On spurious pieces this white composition is hidden by the red ground of the modern gilding. See p. 65.

[3] See the red lacquer bureau-bookcase, No. 10-34, 1913, in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Another important point that is peculiar to genuine lacquer is that the portions of the design in relief, which have been formed in composition and applied on to the wooden carcase of the piece, will crack in the course of time ; and in many old pieces these raised portions will exhibit a network of fine cracks. In many cases the applied composition will have become loose and dropped off and the exposed surface of the wood will have an old and patinated appearance.

When lacquer furniture was originally made, it was finished with a coat of thin varnish. This varnish, through exposure to the air, darkens in time and gives a rich translucent effect to the once bright gilding. This is specially noticeable if the gilding of the interior of a cabinet, which has not been exposed to the air, is compared with the gilding on the outside. One will be bright and new-looking, whilst the other will have turned to a much darker and more mellow tone.

If the collector, by studying genuine pieces of old lacquer, becomes familiar with these characteristics, it will help him considerably to recognise modern lacquering, as none of these details is found on the pieces made by the imitator. It would take too much time and labour to reproduce them accurately, even if it were possible to do so.

With regard to the making of these spurious pieces, the carcase is generally made out of pine.[1] After its surface has been rubbed down, the wood receives three or four coats of a specially prepared paint, the last coat being the colour of the ground ; on this painted surface the design is then drawn and the raised portions applied. When the design has been gilded,[2] the surface is treated with a thin coat of French polish, on the top of which is coated a stiff paste or starch. The strong drawing power of the paste causes the surface of the polish to crack. On the paste being washed off, a dark coloured wax is well worked into these artificial cracks, thus emphasising them, and adding to their antique appearance.

The cracks made in this manner will be large and wide, similar in character to the cracks found on old oil-paintings. Cracks of this description will never be seen on genuine lacquer, on which they are always very fine and hardly perceptible. Another difference between the old pieces and the spurious is that the genuine drop handle, so often found on lacquer furniture,

[1] The majority of genuine pieces have their carcases of deal, with the exception of tables and clock cases, which were generally made of oak. Pine for the carcase work of English furniture was not used until later in the eighteenth century.

[2] In the cheaper type of modern lacquer, which is generally a confessed reproduction, gold bronze powder is used instead of real gold, for the decoration, as it is a much cheaper material.

was fixed on to a double strip of brass which pierced the drawer front, and the two ends of the strip were embedded into the wood on the inside of the drawer. In the modern handles the ends of the strip of brass are kept in position by small brads or pins which are driven into the wood. There is also a difference between the old and new mounts on lacquer cabinets. The original examples were water gilt, whereas the imitations are electro gilt.

CHAPTER VI

GESSO AND GILT FURNITURE

HISTORICAL SURVEY

ALTHOUGH gilding is known to have been used in conjunction with bright colours for the decoration of furniture in mediæval times, the earliest gilt articles which now survive are the stands of Carolean cabinets. But it was only towards the end of the seventeenth century that gilt furniture became fashionable. The taste for it was undoubtedly developed by the introduction of a new process known as Gesso.

In this process, the wood was first covered with a composition of whitening and other ingredients to a thickness of from $\frac{3}{16}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch, according to the depth of the chosen design ; on this prepared surface the design was carved in low relief and the gilding applied in the usual way.[1] In order to enrich the appearance, the background of the carving was then matted or tooled and the parts in relief were highly burnished.

From the rarity of gesso furniture to-day it is evident that only a small quantity of it could have been made, and this for the most part must have been designed for the houses of the wealthy classes, since the finest specimens are found in such places as Blenheim, Houghton, and Hampton Court. Judging from extant examples, small centre or side tables,[2] candle stands (torchères), mirror frames, cabinet stands, chests, chairs, and stools were the articles most usually treated. Small panels of gesso work, either on the splat or the knee of the cabriole leg, are found on walnut chairs, stools, and settees dating from the first quarter of the seventeenth century.

Mirrors with gesso frames exist in larger numbers than any other of these articles.[3] Tables and side tables are met with occasionally,

[1] The advantage of this method is that ornament in very low relief can be far more skilfully and easily cut out of soft plaster than out of wood.

[2] As gesso ornamentation specially lends itself for the decoration of flat surfaces, tables when made in gesso have their tops decorated with a design in low relief, the frieze and legs being treated in a similar manner.

[3] This may be attributed to the fact that, being the first mirrors made with gilt frames, they were looked upon in the light of a novelty, and were accordingly in popular demand for the first thirty or thirty-five years

but articles such as torchères, chests, chairs, and stools are practically unprocurable.

About 1725 the fashion for gesso furniture gradually declined, largely as a result of new influences that brought into vogue a new style of furniture, decorated with bold ornament in high relief, which was carved out of the wood and then gilt. In this, as can be seen from Fig. 57, none of the ornament is in low relief, and the decorated wooden top of the former tables is replaced by marble. There was therefore no occasion to employ gesso. The satyr mask carved on the knees is directly adapted from the style of Louis Quatorze, for the gilt furniture during this short period, unlike the walnut and mahogany, is strongly reminiscent of the contemporary French furniture in its motifs of design.

From about 1730 the design of gilt furniture was influenced by architects, prominent among whom was William Kent, who designed a considerable amount of furniture for the houses that he built or decorated. This was of heavy and massive design, and an example of it is shown in the side table (Fig. 58). The well-known type of gilt console table with marble top, supported by an eagle with wings outspread, dates from this period. About 1745 the architectural style began to wane, and a number of carved wood gilt side and console tables have survived, showing the French and Chinese influences which were prominent from this date to about 1770.

Furniture with the wood carved and gilt is to-day as rare as the earlier variety decorated with gesso, and as in gesso, the pieces most frequently found are mirrors and side tables, with the addition of console tables, which originated in this period and became very popular. Suites of gilt furniture by Kent, dating from this period, and consisting of chairs, stools, and settees, similar to those designed for Devonshire House, are also extant, although very rare. These suites were sometimes in mahogany and gilt, and in most cases were adapted by him from Italian models.

The gilt furniture of the Adam school of design, which dates from about 1775 to the end of the century, is more fully described in Chapter X.

GENUINE AND SPURIOUS

The surface of most of the gesso furniture was originally covered with a thin transparent varnish, and the effect of this varnishing on the gold is

of the eighteenth century. They were the only articles of gesso furniture that were not confined to the patronage of the wealthy.

exactly the same as that on the gold decoration of lacquer furniture, already described in the last chapter. This toning of the gold by the darkening of the varnish through exposure to the atmosphere gives those pieces of furniture found to-day that translucent and metallic appearance which is such a beautiful and attractive feature of the genuine and untouched example.

Unfortunately, it is exceptional to find a piece, dating from this period, in this desirable condition, the main reason being that most of the examples now extant have in recent times been regilt. This modern gilding can in no way be compared with the old, as it lacks the rich and mature tone of the original, being paler and lighter in colour.[1]

Many pieces of gilt furniture are also found with their surfaces painted, generally in a black or brown tone. It is sometimes possible to remove this paint, when the old gilding will be found underneath ; in most cases it will be very bright, although a considerable amount will need to be restored. Pieces thus treated are by no means of so decorative a value as those which have had their gilt surfaces toned by the course of time. Sometimes old pieces will have had their surfaces renovated with gold paint, which is very undesirable, as it cannot be removed, and in the course of time goes a very dark colour through becoming tarnished. Regilding is specially injurious because it obscures and fills up the tooling or stamping of the backgrounds of the design, besides giving a rounded or worn down effect to the low relief decoration which, in an untouched condition, is sharp and clearly defined : this is due to the old gilding having first to be removed, and the surface prepared before the new gilding is applied.

Regilding is not the only depreciator of the value of gesso furniture, as many pieces are met with either much restored or in an imperfect condition. Many gesso tables, for instance, are found to-day with new tops, as the low relief ornament in plaster is very susceptible to wear and bad usage. Sometimes they will be restored with a new gesso top, in which case the entire piece will be regilt to give the old and new parts the same appearance. In many other cases the dilapidated top will have been replaced by a marble one, but this is entirely out of keeping with the table, for it can be said with certainty that these tables were never designed for any other but the low relief gesso top.

[1] This refers more to the Victorian gilding, as the quite modern variety has been brought much nearer in appearance to the old, through the efforts of the imitator, who endeavours to copy the old gilding so as to deceive the unwary. The Victorian gilding was not done with this intention, but simply to brighten and to renovate the dulled gilt on old pieces which to-day would be considered a point of merit, but in that age of vandalism was thought shabby and ugly.

All types of gilt furniture have received attention from the imitator, as, owing to his success in copying the antique appearance of genuine old gilding, he has a wide field for his spurious work. As already mentioned in the chapter on Lacquer, he extensively copies the carved wood and gilt stands of the seventeenth century lacquer cabinet. A number of genuine cabinet stands are found, to-day, painted ; this habit of painting old gilt furniture has already been commented upon. The imitator, to make detection of his spurious stands more difficult, will sometimes gild or silver a stand, and then paint it. This painted surface he will then fake, chipping off the paint in parts, so as to disclose the gilding or silvering underneath. Sometimes these original stands, being separated from their cabinets, are found converted into tables by the addition of marble tops. They were never made originally in this form, but as they are saleable to-day, the imitator produces spurious copies to meet the demand. These can generally be recognised, as in many cases they will not be of the same dimensions as the genuine cabinet stand ; but will be longer and narrower, to conform to the usual proportions of a table. The design of these stands usually follows that of the Charles II. example, with the deep apron pieces carved with amorini amidst foliage.

In gesso furniture the imitator not only produces examples of entirely new construction, such as imitations of chairs, tables, and torchères, but he also enhances the value of plain examples of genuine furniture, dating from this period, with gesso ornament. One of the articles most used for this purpose is the plain early eighteenth century toilet glass ; but no genuine example of a toilet glass decorated with gesso is known. Another favourite method of enhancing the value of plain Queen Anne furniture is to decorate the splats and legs of chairs with gesso panels. Of the carved wood and gilt furniture, dating from about 1720 to about 1745, he will also make imitations of an elaborate character, particularly the carved wood and gilt side table. These spurious tables are heavily laden with ornament, and have none of the refined lines and proportion of the original. The imitator will also frequently copy the table of the architectural style, adopting the very heavy scroll leg, decorated with scaling and elaborately carved swags suspended from the frieze. This kind of spurious table will often be found painted either black or brown with only the carving gilt. This variation is mainly due to the fact that a painted surface lends itself specially to being faked, so as to give it an appearance of age. The collector, to safeguard himself against spurious furniture of this description, should remember the great rarity of the genuine example to-day.

GESSO AND GILT FURNITURE

The following brief remarks describe one or two essential differences between original and spurious gilding.

The surface of gilt furniture in its original condition will become patinated in a similar way to oak and walnut. Unlike the oak and walnut furniture, its surface is not polished with beeswax or oil ; it will, however, naturally be dusted, and the effects of this will be discernible on a piece with its original gilding, as its surface will wear, and the raised portions of the ornament will show the plaster ground where the gilding has been worn off by constant dusting. This feature is most noticeable on the low relief ornament of gesso furniture. As already pointed out in the chapters on Oak and Walnut, dust plays an important part in the making of the patina, accumulating in the interstices of the carving, and forming a dark setting to the lighter projecting parts of the carved design. Although dust does not enrich the effect of gilding in a similar manner, it affects its present-day condition in such a way as to help the collector to distinguish genuine gilding from the modern spurious imitation. On a genuine piece of gilt furniture, such as a table, it will be noticed that the portions of the table that face upwards will be dark in comparison with those parts which face downwards ; the reason being that dust has fallen on the upturned portions, where it lay and gradually darkened the surface of the gilding. Those parts of the table facing downwards will show the gilding much brighter in comparison as, owing to their position, these parts will not be affected by the dust. The sullying effect of dust in this manner can be readily recognised on an old gilt picture frame ; if the frame was always hung in the same position, the bottom, upturned side of the frame will be perceptibly darker than the inside top of the frame, which will face downwards.

This effect of the darkening of gilding by dust, although more accentuated on original gilt pieces of the early eighteenth century, will also be discernible on pieces gilt about twenty-five or thirty years ago. Therefore it can only be used as a test for that gilding which is of quite recent manufacture. The imitator, in his spurious pieces, does not imitate this undoubted but subtle sign of certain age.[1]

The chief feature of the spurious imitation of old gilding is generally the fact that the gilding is applied on to a red ground, which is specially noticeable because the imitator, in order to simulate the appearance of age, rubs off the gilding, and thus exposes the ground underneath. This gilding

[1] As an example of this effect of dust darkening portions of a piece of gilt furniture the Louis Quatorze gilt torchère in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, should be examined.

on a red ground is characteristic more of spurious or modern gilding than of genuine work. To tone down the brightness of the gold, the imitator applies a wash of stain over the gilt surface. By gently wiping the gilt surface with a damp cloth, this stain can be removed, thus exposing the bright gilding underneath. It will take two or three years for the gilding to become sufficiently hard to resist this test. Spurious gilding, however, when it is three or four years old, can then generally be recognised by its even dark tone, caused through dust adhering to its faked and sticky surface, and this gradual alteration in tone results, ultimately, in the loss of its antique appearance. If the imitator was content to gild his furniture, and leave it for time to tone down, in the course of thirty or forty years there would be a much greater similarity between his gilding and the genuine gilding of the eighteenth century. Owing, however, to commercial reasons, it is not possible for him to do this, as he must obtain an appearance of age straight away.

SILVERED FURNITURE

From the time of Charles II. to that of William and Mary, articles were sometimes silvered instead of gilded, and this silvered work is, to-day, the more highly prized because of its rarity. Gesso furniture was never silvered, and the examples that have survived are confined to the stands of cabinets and picture frames, dating from the last thirty years of the seventeenth century. The stands of the two lacquer cabinets illustrated (Figs. 48 and 49) are good examples of this genuine silvering. Genuine old silvered work,[1] owing to its having been varnished originally, like the gilt furniture, has a yellow tinge over its surface, specially noticeable in the crevices of the carved design. The surface of the old silvering is also generally covered with a fine network of cracks, and these are much more noticeable on silvered than on gilded work. These characteristics of old silvered work should be carefully noticed on genuine examples, as they will be a safeguard to the collector against the spurious imitation which is extensively made at the present time. The imitations lack these peculiarities, as it is time alone that can produce them.

[1] These silvered carved wood articles must not be confused with furniture of solid silver, or covered with very thin sheet silver, the few surviving specimens of which are confined to tables, torchères, and mirror frames. These, naturally, are of great value and extreme rarity, and most known examples date from the late seventeenth century.

CHAPTER VII

MIRRORS

1660–1800

HISTORICAL SURVEY

THE glass mirror was not invented until the seventeenth century, the only form of mirror prior to this time being that made of polished metal. The method of silvering glass was discovered by the Venetians, who monopolised the making of glass mirror plates until a factory was established in Paris about 1665. In England about 1670 the Duke of Buckingham's factory for the manufacture of glass and mirror plates was set up at Vauxhall. The early mirrors that have survived from the reign of Charles II. are small and square or oblong in shape; the frames are of a bold heavy section decorated with either plain walnut veneer, oyster-shell, or marquetry, similar to Fig. 52. Mirror frames of this period were also decorated with tortoise-shell and metal mounts, and sometimes with needlework or beadwork, the making of which was so fashionable a pursuit in the Stuart days. Mirrors of this type were also made with their frames in lacquer, and there are also one or two examples extant with embossed silver frames, but these were made by the silversmith and not by the cabinet-maker.

At the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, mirrors were remarkable for their height, being so made to accord with the greater height of the rooms of the new mansions. Mirrors of this tall type were always made of two plates, the ostensible reason being that at this period glass sheets could not be made longer than 4 ft. without running them too thin to stand grinding. Whether this was the only reason cannot definitely be stated; but the decorative value is greatly enhanced by their being made in two plates instead of one, and as the small mirrors were also made in this manner it would appear that the old designers did realise the value and proportion added to a mirror by having its surface

divided into two planes. These mirrors are sometimes found with frames of veneered walnut, or, more rarely, with glass borders set in metal mounts. Sometimes the glass borders were decorated with bevelling, and at the corners the joints would be covered with shaped pieces of a deep blue glass; similar frames to this are also decorated with a design on the back of the glass borders, the ornament being generally in the style of Boule and executed in gold on a black, blue, green, or red ground (Fig. 51).

Mention was made in the preceding chapter on Gesso and Gilt Furniture of mirrors with gilt gesso frames which first appeared at the end of the seventeenth century; during the time of Queen Anne these gesso mirrors and those with plain walnut frames were both very popular types. Lacquer mirrors also shared this popularity, although fewer examples have survived, as many must have perished owing to the delicate nature of the lacquer. All the above types of mirrors were invariably designed with hoods similar to the two examples illustrated (Figs. 51 and 52). The fine mirror shown in Fig. 53, of about 1720, has its frame decorated in gesso and the bolder parts in carved wood; the eagles' heads decorating the hood or cresting were a favourite motif of design at this period, and, as was pointed out in Chapter IV, are also found on walnut furniture. Another variety of mirror made about this time was in walnut and gilt, the flat surfaces of the frame being overlaid with cross-banded walnut veneer and the carved mouldings gilded. From about 1730 mirrors were made on architectural lines with a pediment top, as shown in Fig. 55. This type of architectural mirror varies in form and design considerably; and about 1745 it gave place to the mirror influenced by the contemporary French rococo style[1] and to mirrors made in the Chinese and Gothic tastes which became popular at this period. These mirror frames, in the French, Chinese, and Gothic tastes, showed many extravagances, birds, animals, temples, and mandarin figures being pressed into service for decoration. Sometimes the frames of these mirrors were designed with small ledges for supporting china ornaments.

From about 1765–1800 mirrors came under the influence of the Adam school of design. The oval-shaped mirror became popular at this period; and towards the end of the century mirrors are found of oval or oblong form with a cresting composed of swags, husks, and pateræ, made either of composition or wood and affixed to wires.

About 1790 the well-known circular, convex mirror, surmounted by a

[1] See Fig. 54.

A tall Mirror formed of two bevelled glass plates. The black and gold design on the glass border is applied on the back.

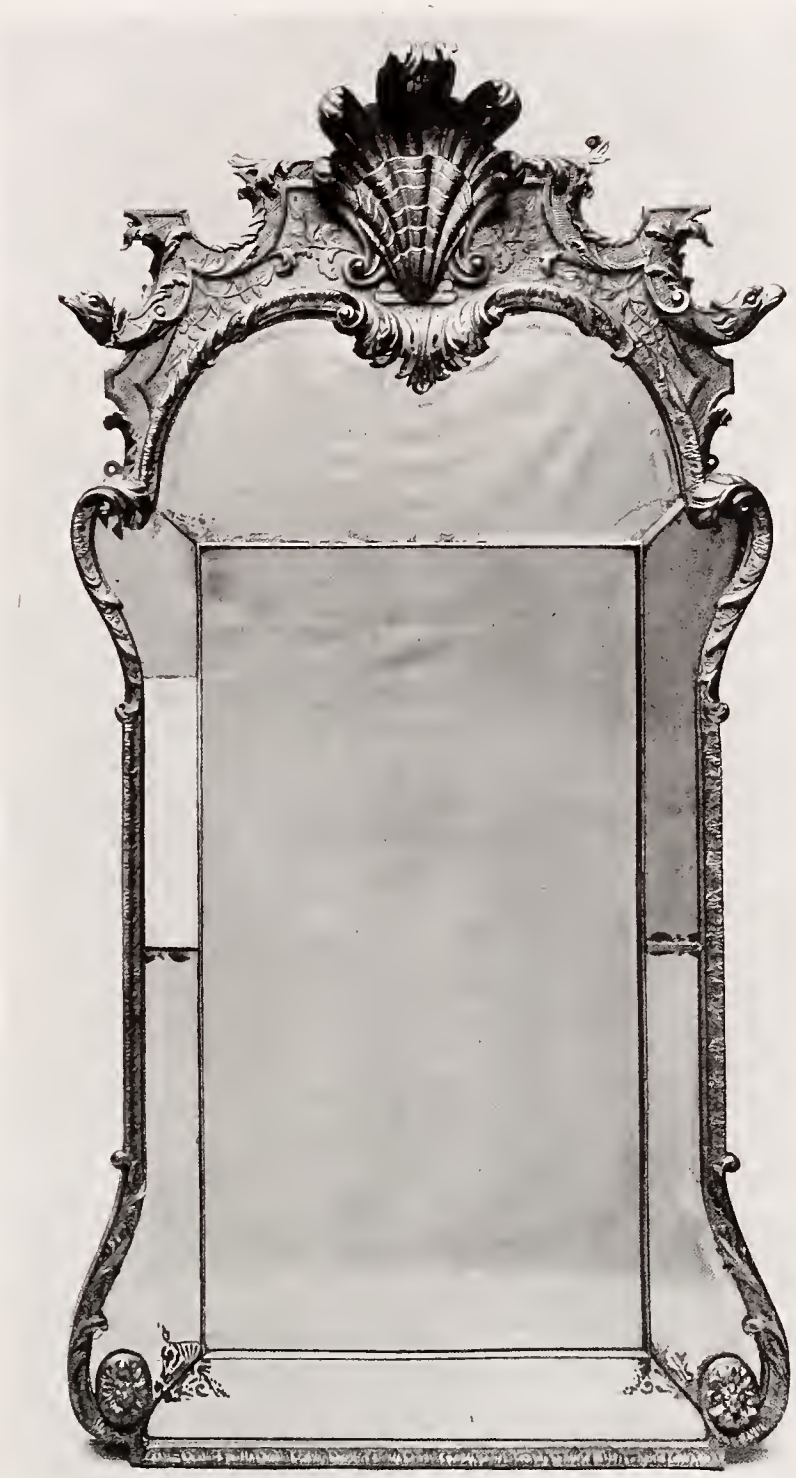
Circa 1700.

Fig. 51. Col. C.

A Mirror in frame with hood, decorated with floral marquetry in the Dutch style.

Circa 1690.

Fig. 52. Col. C.



Mirror, with glass borders in narrow carved and gilt frame, with elaborately carved cresting.
Circa 1720.

Fig. 53. Col. O.

Mirror in carved and gilt frame.
Circa 1755.

Fig. 54. Col. D.

Mirror in carved and gilt frame of architectural design.
Circa 1735.

Fig. 55. Col. C.

carved eagle, was introduced ; this type of mirror continued to be made in large numbers well into the nineteenth century.

Besides the wall mirrors, there was another kind known as the overmantel mirror, designed to rest on the shelf of a chimney-piece. The earliest of these, from examples that have survived, would appear to date from Queen Anne's reign. They have plain veneered walnut frames with a narrow horizontal glass, divided into three plates in the lower portion: and with an oil painting, generally of still life, above the glass.[1] These overmantel mirrors do not appear to have been made during the architectural period, but were again introduced about 1750, when they had their frames decorated in the French, Chinese, and Gothic tastes. Robert Adam also utilised these overmantel mirrors, and there are several existing to-day, designed by him for houses which he built and decorated. Towards the end of the eighteenth century another type of the overmantel mirror came into fashion ; in this type the glass was formed into three divisions, and the frieze was generally decorated with low relief ornament of Adam design, sometimes in carved wood but more often in composition. This type is called a "Chelsea Mirror," and must have been made up to about 1840 ; some of those dating from the early nineteenth century are ornamented with motifs of the Empire style of design, such as the sphinx's head.

GENUINE AND SPURIOUS MIRRORS

The square or oblong mirrors with cross-banded, veneered walnut frames, dating from the William and Mary and Queen Anne periods, are very often met with to-day, especially those of small size ; but this cannot be said of those decorated with marquetry, which are much rarer. Many of these plain, walnut-framed mirrors therefore have had marquetry panels let into their frames ; this deception can be detected, as the new work will not be level with the old but will be slightly sunk or concave, because it is impossible for the imitator to counteract the shrinkage of the new inlaid work on it becoming dry and set. It will also be necessary for him to repolish the whole of the frame after he has completed the deception. These mirrors are often found to-day with the hoods missing, as owing to their fragile nature many must have been broken and lost in the course of time. If the back of the mirror is examined, the slots where the hood was originally fixed

[1] A few are extant with a needlework panel in place of the picture.

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[1] A few are extant with a needlework panel in place of the picture.

will be seen. This applies not only to the walnut marquetry and lacquer-framed mirrors of this period, but also to the mirrors with glass borders. The collector should therefore understand that when he meets with a mirror of this type without a hood it is imperfect.

The tall type of mirror in walnut of large dimensions is especially rare to-day ; and the type with bevelled and decorated glass borders is still rarer. Most examples extant of the latter type have the background of the borders black ; mirrors with the blue, green, and red colourings in the borders are exceptionally rare. The design on the borders is usually found, however, in a very perished state, but this can be so restored that the old and new parts are hardly distinguishable. The collector, therefore, when he finds a mirror of this description with its decorated borders in perfect order, should make careful examination of them in case most of the design has been restored. The value of the mirror with a walnut frame depends greatly on the frame being in an untouched condition with a good patina, as many of them unfortunately have been French polished.

As already mentioned, gesso mirrors of the more ordinary type exist in considerable numbers to-day. The mirror of the architectural type is not so frequently found, and this can also be said of the mirrors in the French, Chinese, or Gothic tastes of the middle of the century. All these gilt and gesso mirrors are found with their frames in a more or less restored state ; the mirror of architectural design often has the pediment missing or the small apron piece at the bottom. The back of the mirror should be examined for any variation of appearance of the deal framework, for in a genuine mirror the back will be dark in colour through the accumulation of dirt and dust on the surface. If this framework is new-looking, wholly or in parts, suspicion should be aroused, especially if a white mould or bloom is found on the surface ; the reason for this has already been given.[1]

Mirrors are often found to-day with portions of the gilt frame a dark colour in comparison with the remaining parts ; this is due to the mirror having been restored and the new parts only gilt. When the restored work was newly gilded it had the same appearance as the old, but, as has already been explained, modern faked gilding changes in colour after the lapse of a few years. Motifs of design such as masks, birds, animals, or mandarin figures add considerably to the present-day value of a mirror, this kind of ornament being found only in the more important examples of high quality.

The mirrors of Adam design of the late eighteenth century, with the

[1] See p. 15.

cresting of composition affixed to wires, must have been made in considerable numbers in oval and oblong shape. To-day, however, it is the mirror and the frame that have generally survived ; the cresting, owing to its delicate construction, has, in most cases, been destroyed. Many of these mirror frames, therefore, have had their crestings restored ; and by far the greater number existing to-day are in this condition.

A number of mirrors dating from the last half of the eighteenth century had frames made of paper pulp ; they are generally oval in shape, of the early Adam style, decorated with rococo scrolls and foliage. These mirrors are naturally of less value than the carved wood examples, as they were made by mechanical process and not by hand ; if they are examined from the back the paper pulp can easily be detected.

Mirrors of the late Adam period, with their decoration in composition, are of inferior value to those of carved wood. To detect composition from wood it should be tested with a sharp-pointed penknife ; wood will be found soft, but the composition will be hard and resisting.

Mirrors of the eighteenth century were often made, originally, in pairs, the reason being that one of the favourite positions for them was between the windows of a room ; and as many of the Georgian rooms had three windows this would necessitate two mirrors. To-day, pairs of genuine mirrors are not often met with, especially of the Queen Anne and early Georgian periods. In purchasing a pair of mirrors, careful comparison should be made between the two for any variation in the carving or gilding, as, owing to mirrors in pairs having more than double the value of one, many pairs are found, to-day, consisting of one old mirror and a modern reproduction.

Overmantel mirrors are not so highly valued to-day as the wall mirrors ; this, however, does not refer to the early Queen Anne type with walnut frame. A genuine specimen of the walnut overmantel mirror with its old picture is very rarely found. This scarcity of the original article has resulted in the manufacture of many spurious ones, the frames being veneered, sometimes, with old veneer. The imitator has no difficulty in finding a suitable picture for the upper part, his choice being sometimes a still-life subject, but generally a landscape or seascape.

All eighteenth century glasses had bevelled edges, with the exception of the very rococo-framed mirror of the middle of the century, where a shaped bevel following the intricate lines of the frame would not have been in good taste. This bevelling is specially noticeable in the

mirrors of the William and Mary and early Queen Anne periods. Various kinds of bevelling are found on these glasses, especially with the tall type formed with two plates and frames of glass borders. The edges where the two plates join are sometimes serrated and cut, in addition to both edges of the plates being bevelled. The bevelling on an old mirror is at so shallow an angle that it can only just be felt when the finger-tips are passed over it. The reason for this shallow bevelling was not only that it increased the decorative effect of the mirror, but also owing to the extreme thinness of the glass plates, which seldom exceeded a thickness of $\frac{3}{16}$ of an inch. The bevel of a modern glass which is $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch in thickness is much deeper, and shows prismatic colours. The old bevelling, which appears concave, was done by hand with pumice-stone; but the modern bevelling is produced by sandstone with a machine, and has an irregular surface.

The thickness of the glass of a mirror can be seen and tested if a coin is placed touching the surface of the glass, the distance between the reflection and the coin being the thickness of the glass. Nineteenth century glass is thicker than the eighteenth century variety.

If the back of an eighteenth century mirror plate is examined it will be found to be silvered; a modern mirror plate has the back coated with a composition of a brick-red colour. This variation is due to the old mirrors being silvered by the mercurial process and the new mirrors by a patent process.

The possession of the original glass adds distinctly to the attributes of an old mirror; even if it gives a very dark reflection and the glass is pitted with rust, it has far more decorative value than if it was replaced with a modern perfect glass. Therefore, as it is desirable to have the frame of the mirror in its untouched state, the same thing can also be said of the mirror plate. A new mirror plate will clash badly with an original frame. Many mirrors having lost their original glass plates have had them replaced by new ones; when a mirror is met with to-day without a bevel this is probably what has happened (*i.e.* excepting the mirrors with the rococo design frames). In mirrors which are formed of two plates sometimes one of the plates will be new, in which case the difference in the tone of the reflection will be distinctly noticeable; the old glass gives a blackish reflection, whereas that of the new glass is whiter.

The experienced imitator, knowing the decorative value of the old glass with its shallow bevelling and dimmed reflection, makes his new mirror plate so closely resembling the old, both in the bevelling and the dark

A Stand decorated in Gesso, with original gilding.
Circa 1710.

Fig. 56. Col. M.

A Sidetable, carved wood and gilt, with marble top.
Circa 1725.

Fig. 57. Col. D.

reflection of the glass,[1] that these spurious mirror plates have to be scrutinised very closely before they can be detected. Generally, however, he overdoes the artificial antique appearance by disfiguring the silvering with too many defects. Old mirrors are never desirable when the glass is too eaten away with rust and the old mercury has perished or become spotted through damp. It is the dim reflection that is so attractive to-day in an old mirror, as it is in perfect harmony with its frame, both having grown old together.

[1] In the genuine mirror plate the dark reflection is mainly due to the composition of the glass itself, but in the imitation the effect has to be produced by means of the silvering applied to the back, as modern glass is clear and white.

CHAPTER VIII

FURNITURE OF THE EARLY MAHOGANY PERIOD

1720–1745

DESIGN AND DECORATION

FURNITURE began to be made in mahogany about the year 1720. Unlike walnut, which had a natural decorative effect with the fine figure and natural beauty of its grain, this new wood had no fine figure to recommend it, but was eminently suitable for carving. Consequently it may be said that the introduction of mahogany for furniture making coincided with, if it did not actually inspire, a new fashion in ornament; for it is at this period that the eagle and lion heads and the lion masks, which were the salient features of the new furniture, first made their appearance. The actual form of the various articles of early mahogany furniture adhered closely to that of the walnut, with the addition, however, of these carved motifs; but as mahogany borrowed its design from walnut, so in return walnut was lent decoration by mahogany; and, accordingly, pieces of walnut furniture, made after the initial entry of mahogany into the furniture world, are found decorated with the same carved features as are found in mahogany. This mutual interchange of design and ornament is illustrated in Figs. 61 and 46, the first showing a mahogany two-chair-back settee with the hoop back of the Walnut period, but the lion heads of the new style decorating the ends of the arms; the second, a three-chair-back walnut settee, retaining the form of the walnut furniture, but decorated with the new motifs of the lion masks and paw feet.

Comparing the best quality furniture of this period in these two woods, the walnut articles are richer in effect than those in mahogany; for while both have a common feature in the ornate motifs of the new style, the plain surfaces of the mahogany, lacking the fine figure of the walnut, appear plainer and heavier, only relieved by the small amount of carved ornament with which they are adorned.

EARLY MAHOGANY FURNITURE

The repeal in 1733 of the duty on imported timber, which cheapened the cost of mahogany, undoubtedly accentuated the making of furniture in this wood. But for some years after this date mahogany furniture, ornate in design and of high quality and workmanship, must have been expensive and only within the means of the fashionable and wealthy classes for whom it was principally made. The more ordinary type of walnut furniture, as already mentioned, was still made up to 1735, and although plain mahogany furniture was being made on the lines of the walnut, mahogany did not hold the market for the cheaper furniture until walnut went out of use. This is undoubtedly proved by the scarcity in mahogany of this period of such articles as the plain bureau bookcase, bureau, chest-with-drawers, and long case clock, all of which would be used by the middle classes. A considerable number of these articles in walnut have survived, dating up to 1735 or later. About 1735 the lion masks and heads on the chairs, stools, settees, and tables gradually disappeared, and the chairs and settees of this time lost the hoop-shaped back, so typical of the walnut furniture, and became lighter in design, with pierced and carved splats in the backs (Figs. 63, 81, and 82).

Just before 1730, the design of mahogany furniture, like that of the gilt, was affected by the demand of the contemporary architects for furniture to suit the rooms of the many new town and country mansions being erected by them in the classical style. This influence specially affected the design of wall furniture, such as cabinets, bookcases, mirrors, and side tables.[1] In some cases corner cabinets and bookcases were treated as part of the panelling of the room, being made in deal, similar to the panelling, and painted with it. Bookcases of this period had doors glazed with panes set in heavy bars similar to the contemporary windows. The panels of the doors in bureau bookcases and cabinets were glazed with mirror plates in continuation of the William and Mary tradition. Tops of these pieces were surmounted by classical cornices and pediments supported by fluted pilasters with carved Corinthian caps. The bottom part of the bookcases and cabinets were often designed with a plinth or podium, on which the pilasters of the upper part rested, following the treatment of a classic order of architecture, the skirting or plinth being similar in section to that of the panelling.

[1] See also its effect on gilt furniture, p. 62. The foremost of these architects was William Kent, who was particularly identified with the design of furniture, though he attempted all branches of design, including ladies' dresses and book illustrations.

COLOUR AND PATINA

The mahogany used at this period came from Central America and was known as "Spanish Mahogany"; its chief characteristics are its close grain, weight, and rich dark brown colour. Pieces found with a good patina have a lustrous metallic appearance, the result of having been rubbed, when first made, with linseed oil, this treatment having the effect of closing up the grain of the mahogany and hardening its surface. Spanish mahogany is much harder and heavier than other kinds, such as the Cuban and Honduras, which were the varieties most generally employed for furniture making in the last half of the eighteenth century.

As already mentioned in Chapter I, the feature that is so desirable in a piece of furniture is the dark setting to the carving. This is characteristic of all pieces in mahogany of the early period which have a good colour and patina.

WORKMANSHIP

Pieces of this period, such as cabinets, bookcases, etc., were made in the solid mahogany, and veneering was confined to the splats of the hoop-back chairs and the friezes of tables.

The carving and cabinetwork were of the highest quality, in fact it may be said that at no period in the making of English furniture were they surpassed. Deal was seldom used for drawers or carcase work, oak being invariably employed, and this fact is an additional proof that the early mahogany furniture was very expensive and made almost exclusively for the wealthy classes.

SPURIOUS MAHOGANY FURNITURE

The imitator does not, as a general rule, make spurious mahogany pieces of entirely new construction, owing to the difficulty of copying the right colour and patina of old mahogany on freshly cut wood. As stated in Chapter II, mahogany veneer exposed to the action of sal ammoniac[1] in

[1] But treated in this way the veneer, when French polished, has a bluish sheen which is never found on the natural brown colour of old mahogany.

A deal Sidetable, with marble top, originally gilt but now painted.
Circa 1735.

Fig. 58. Col. L.

A mahogany Sidetable of exceptional design and quality of carving.
Circa 1730.

Fig. 59. Col. F.

a fume cupboard will obtain the colour of old mahogany, but this process cannot be applied to solid pieces, as the fumes do not penetrate sufficiently deep to be of any use. To get over this difficulty the imitator sometimes uses American walnut, which is similar in grain, and when treated with acids takes a colour very like that of old mahogany ; being walnut it is much easier to patinate its soft surface than the harder mahogany. It is usually employed for spurious chairs and legs of tables, but is not suitable for large surfaces. Sometimes, to obviate the difficulty of obtaining the right patina, the imitator will use old pieces with a patinated surface, such as the tops of Victorian tables, invariably of Spanish mahogany, or inferior quality wood obtained from old shop counters, but these supplies of old material are very limited, and he has still to contend with the freshly cut edges. Whether the spurious piece is made in veneer or solid mahogany, the wood when freshly cut will have an open grain, although every endeavour will be made to fill this up. Indeed, the imitator will, in many cases, coat the surface so liberally with French polish that the open grain will be hidden ; but then the surface, although the high gloss of the polish is removed by rubbing down, will be perfectly smooth and greasy to the touch, and with the cold feeling which has already been described as a characteristic of false patina. The experienced imitator, however, does not usually resort to this thick coating of French polish, but risks exposure of the open grain in order to obtain a nearer imitation of the surface condition of the genuine piece.

Most of the work of the imitator, therefore, takes the form of adaptations, such as "carving up" the mouldings of a plain piece, or decorating its plain surfaces with applied carving, similar to that found on genuine pieces, like the cabinet in Fig. 66. He will also add broken pediment tops to plain bureau bookcases, thus increasing their importance and adding to their present-day value. The open grain on the newly cut mouldings will, however, be a sure indication of spurious work. This open grain is never found on genuine pieces, having been closed up by the application of linseed oil. *The collector should make himself familiar with the appearance of the open grain of freshly cut mahogany and the closed grain of the old mahogany*, as this knowledge will prove his surest safeguard against the wiles of the imitator.

Chairs, Stools, and Settees.—Mahogany chairs, like those in walnut, were made originally in sets; but a set in mahogany is as rare as a set in walnut. Mahogany chairs, however, either in sets or singly, are by no means so highly prized as walnut chairs of the same design. The dark tone and absence of fine figure in the mahogany, compared with the rich light brown colour and marking of the walnut, easily account for this.

As already explained, the type of chair, stool, and settee decorated with the lion mask has been extensively copied in walnut, and a number of similar imitations exist in mahogany.[1]

With regard to the settees, of which many imitations are made, a feature in the design of the genuine settee should be noticed. In a two-chair-back settee there will always be one front centre leg; in a three-chair-back settee there will be two centre legs, these two legs being in line with the uprights of the chair backs; in the four-chair-back settee there will be three legs. In the stuffed-back settee the number of front legs will be in proportion to its length. If the illustrations of settees are examined this feature will be clearly seen. This characteristic has been specially pointed out, because the imitator will often make a three-chair-back settee with only one leg in the middle or a two-chair-back settee without a centre leg. In the upholstered-back settees he will also err in the proportions of the front legs to the length, by placing one leg in the middle of a piece which, if a genuine example, would have had two legs. Sometimes a genuine chair-back settee will be found with its front leg missing; examination of the underframing will, however, show the marks where it had originally been fixed.

A point to be remembered in connection with stools is that many examples with the cabriole legs and claw and ball feet are often found to-day with their legs made up out of chair legs. This type has generally an upholstered seat (Fig. 80), and not a drop-in seat as shown in Fig. 79. This spurious work can be detected, because, owing to the front of a chair being wider than the back, the front leg is made at an acute angle, whereas the leg of a stool is at a right angle. Therefore, in applying chair legs to a stool, the two wings at each side of the knee of the cabriole leg, which are always made in separate pieces from the leg, cannot both be in line with the outer edge of the framework of the seat. One of the wings will run under the framing; sometimes the wings

[1] The remarks made concerning the making of these spurious walnut chairs refer also to those found in mahogany. See p. 44.

A mahogany Settee, arms terminating in small lion heads.
Circa 1730.

Fig. 60. Col. C.

A mahogany Settee. (The design shows that it is one of the early pieces made in mahogany.)
Circa 1725.

Fig. 61. Col. D.

A mahogany Chair of the lion mask period.
Circa 1730.

Fig. 62. Col. C.

A mahogany Chair.
Circa 1745.

Fig. 63. Col. C.

A mahogany Armchair, in the French taste, with the legs terminating in scroll toes.
Circa 1755.

Fig. 64. Col. C.

A walnut Armchair, upholstered in *gros* and *petit point* needlework.
Circa 1740.

Fig. 65. Col. C.

of a leg will be fixed so that they are in line with the edge of the framework, but in this case the space between the wings and the leg will be filled in with wedges, which can be seen on examining the inside of the leg. This type of stool is not being made to-day, as single chairs with cabriole legs are rare ; but there are a large number of these reconstructed stools about, and the collector should realise that their market value is not so great as that of the genuine article.

Another characteristic of a genuine stool is that the beech underframing will have its surface in most cases patinated, because a stool is generally picked up by the underframing, and constant handling in this manner over a long period will have affected it in this way. This characteristic will be better appreciated by comparing the underframing of a stool with that of a chair ; the latter being handled by the back when moved, its underframing will not have this patinated look. This slight patinating of the beech underframing of stools will be useful to the collector in avoiding the many spurious specimens of new construction. Stools with the drop-in seat are, if anything, more desirable than those with their upholstering over the seat rail ; most of the spurious stools are made in the latter form.

Bureaux and Bureau Bookcases.—As already mentioned, the early mahogany bureau is to-day seldom found. Most of those extant date from the last half of the eighteenth century.

The bureau bookcase is found in mahogany on the lines of the walnut bureau bookcase and also in the architectural style already described. The latter is by far the rarest form, and is generally of fine quality workmanship, with a single door in the upper part, surmounted by a broken pediment and decorated with carved mouldings and applied carved ornamentation. Both types of these bureau bookcases are either found with mirrors in the doors of the upper part or with wooden panels.[1] The type with the glazed lattice doors was not made until the second half of the eighteenth century. As already stated, the plain mahogany bureau bookcase is often found with its mouldings "carved up" and also decorated with applied carved ornament. Sometimes a specimen is found with the flap decorated with applied carved mouldings ; these mouldings are always spurious, as the flap of a genuine bureau was never decorated in this manner.

[1] A mahogany bureau bookcase of this period with solid wood panels in the doors of the upper part is shown in Fig. 83 ; its date is about 1740.

Bookcases and Cabinets.—Bookcases of the early Mahogany period are generally of the finest quality as regards workmanship and carving. This refers, however, to those of architectural design, as a plainer type of mahogany bookcase, similar to the late walnut examples, is also met with.

Early mahogany china cabinets, like those in walnut, are of great rarity. A few mahogany cabinets are extant, similar in design to Fig. 66. These invariably had mirrors fitted to the panels in the upper part; they were, therefore, not display cabinets, but were intended more as decorative pieces of furniture for the large halls and rooms designed by William Kent and other architects. Many of the mirrors in this type of cabinet and bureau bookcase have to-day been replaced by plain glass to convert them into china cabinets, thus marring their appearance. The designers of the eighteenth century fully realised the decorative value of mirrors let into the panels of a piece of furniture. Their artistic effect in those days must have been specially attractive, as the mirrors would contain, like a rich picture, reflections of the panelled rooms with their tapestries, pictures, and lighted candles.

A large plain sheet of glass let into the door of a cabinet interrupts its design, and it was not until the decadent age of the middle of the nineteenth century that cabinets and bookcase doors were glazed in this manner.

Doors which have had their mirrors exchanged for pieces of plain glass can be detected by examining the back of the framework for any sign of small holes which may have been filled up. The original mirrors were protected by wooden backboards screwed to the framework; the presence of these holes caused by the screws denotes, therefore, that the door contained originally a mirror with a wooden backboard.

Pedestal Writing Tables.—At this date, these could not have been nearly so popular for writing purposes as the walnut bureaux, many of which have survived, while the pedestal table is known to-day by only a few fine specimens.[1] These are all of high quality workmanship and elaborately carved, the decorations in some cases including lion masks, mouldings, and friezes of classical design according to the school of William Kent.

The pedestal writing table of this period is so rare and valuable to-day that the imitator has made many elaborate adaptations of the plain mahogany writing table—a piece which in nearly every case dates from the last half of the eighteenth century—by carving its plain mouldings and adding such

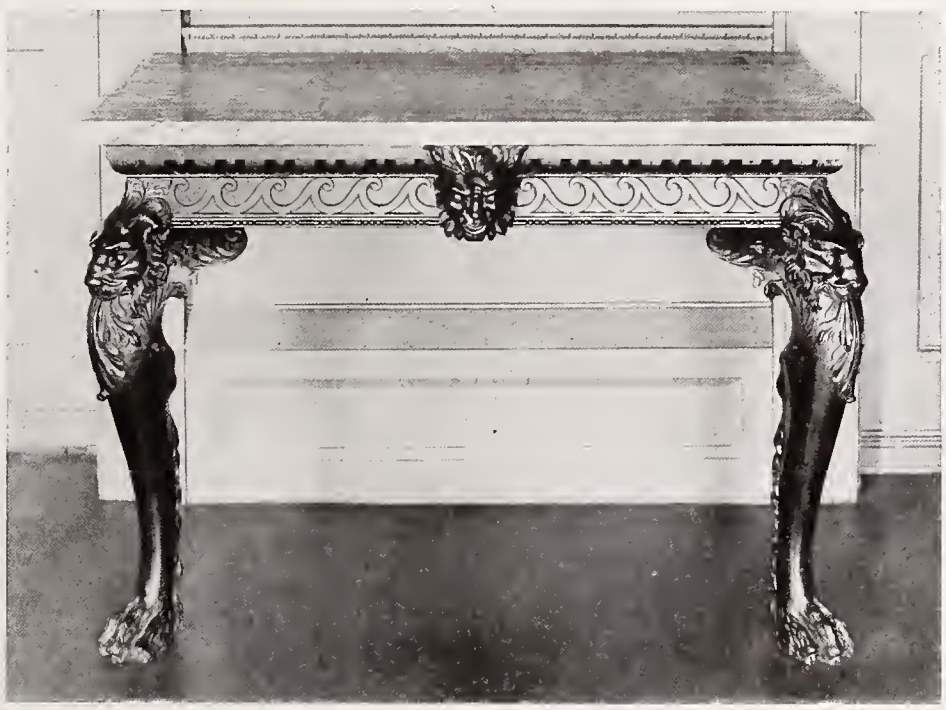
[1] The popularity of the bureau as compared with the pedestal writing table is also noticeable, but in a less marked degree, in connection with the furniture of the later half of the eighteenth century.

A mahogany Cabinet of architectural design, with original mirror plates in doors. *Circa* 1735.

Fig. 66. Col. S.

A mahogany Sidetable, with marble top and carved apron piece.
Circa 1735.

Fig. 67. Col. C.



A mahogany Console Table of the lion mask period.
Circa 1735.

Fig. 68. Col. C.

valuable motifs of design as the lion mask and other applied carvings. When, therefore, the collector comes across pedestal writing tables purporting to be of this period, he should remember the extreme rarity of the genuine piece and make a particularly careful investigation.

Card Tables, Side Tables, and Dining Tables.—The card tables of the early Mahogany period are found with cabriole legs, sometimes decorated with lion masks and paw feet, but generally with claw and ball feet and knees with acanthus foliage. The lion mask table is very rare and highly valued to-day, and, as with the chairs of a similar design, walnut examples are more prized than those in mahogany.

A mahogany table with its frieze in the architectural style is shown in Fig. 93. Tables made about 1735 had their corners square and not rounded like the earlier examples.

Another feature introduced on card tables in the latter years of this period was the carving of the edges to the top with the rose and ribbon design, seen in Fig. 93. Card tables also began to have serpentine fronts as in the table shown in Fig. 45, which must be a very early example of this pattern, as the design of the legs and the fact that the table is of walnut, point to a date of about 1730. The remarks made about card tables in the chapter on Walnut Furniture refer also in general to mahogany card tables of this period.

Sometimes mahogany card tables are found with double tops, one for card-playing and the other generally inlaid with a backgammon board; these are seldom found on a table of high quality decorated with carving. The majority of the card tables of this period extant to-day are plain, with plain cabriole legs terminating in club feet. These card tables are eagerly bought up by the imitator in order to "carve-up" the legs and edges of the tops.

One peculiarity of genuine card tables with the edge of their tops decorated with carving, is that the ornament on the front edge is more worn than that at the ends of the sides. This is owing to the fact that when the card table was closed and standing against a wall (its normal position) the front edge would receive most of the handling and rubbing. This variation in wear is not found on tables with their edges carved by the imitator, who by sand-papering and brushing counterfeits the worn appearance equally over the whole of the carving.

The side table must have been a favourite article of furniture at this period, since more fine examples of it exist than of any other kind of table.

The design varies considerably, as may be seen by comparing the two pieces illustrated in Fig. 59 and Fig. 67, and the mahogany console table, Fig. 68.[1] Mahogany console tables are sometimes found with a design of dolphins, the tails of which support the frieze of the marble top.

All side tables of this period have marble tops, the mahogany top not being introduced until about 1770. The possession of a fine original marble top considerably increases the present-day value of a side table; less important pieces would be mounted with white Sicilian marble, but for examples of high quality black or yellow marble would be used. A type of marble also much in favour at this period for the tops of fine tables was that known as Breche violette, which has black and purple markings on a white ground.

Side tables can have been very seldom made in walnut, as very few examples are extant; and as the majority of the mahogany side tables that have survived are finely carved and of high quality, the side table of this period must have been a piece of furniture made only for the wealthy classes.

The oval-top dining table with cabriole legs similar to Fig. 71 was introduced in this period. Like the side tables, it is hardly ever met with in walnut, and it varies in size from 3 ft. 6 in. to 5 ft. 6 in. across the top. Unlike the side table, a number of these tables were made with plain legs, as, being a novelty of this period, they were most probably in popular demand by all classes. Having solid wood tops these tables could not very well be made in walnut, but mahogany examples exist in larger numbers to-day than any other articles of this period. Sometimes the legs of these tables, in very early specimens, are found decorated with an escallop shell. A few rare examples exist with the lion mask motif carved on the knees of the legs, and a few with octagon-shaped tops.

Tripod Furniture.—Other innovations in this period are the table with circular top and the firescreen with a panel of needlework, both supported on tripod feet. The stem and tripod feet in fine examples are decorated with carving, the feet of the tripod ending generally in a claw and ball foot and more rarely a lion paw foot; the tops of the tables were circular and generally decorated with a pie-crust edge (Figs. 74, 75, and 77).

Another variety of the tripod table measured about 2 ft. in height (Figs. 69 and 70). Mahogany candlestands on tripod feet are also found in this

[1] This type of table was more commonly made in gilt.

early Mahogany period, and, like the carved wood and gilt specimens, are very rare and highly prized to-day. These candle-stands and torchères were generally made in pairs. Another piece of tripod furniture was the dumb waiter, generally with three circular platforms, but specimens are very seldom found with the legs and stems carved. The one illustrated is of very unusual design and dates from this period. Generally speaking, dumb waiters are not in great demand to-day, as they are no longer commonly used.

The tripod tables of the early and middle periods of mahogany, when found with carved legs and stems and carved pie-crust tops, are to-day more sought after by the collector than perhaps any other mahogany tables, and genuine specimens realise high prices. The scarcity and consequent value of the tripod table with carved legs and decorated top is an incentive to the imitator to make many spurious copies. He is considerably helped in this respect by the very large number of plain mahogany tripod tables that exist, which he is able to "carve-up" in such a way as to make them resemble the decorated specimens. The imitator for his work chooses a plain, well-shaped, massive tripod table, which will give him sufficient material on which to carve the ornament. The feet of these spurious tripods generally terminate with a toe decorated with foliage, the reason being that there is not sufficient material in the foot of the old plain tripod to permit the imitator to convert it into a claw and ball foot ; as, however, this is a very necessary adjunct to make these tables saleable, he will sometimes glue pieces of wood on to each side of the original foot, in order to obtain sufficient width for the carving of the claw and ball. In all genuine tables the claw and ball foot is carved out of one piece ; but if a spurious foot of this description is examined, the joints where these extra pieces are glued on can be detected. Where there is a sufficient width of material for the ball, but not enough for the claw, the claws will be added in separate pieces. In other cases, in order to get over the difficulty of lack of material in the toes of the old tripods, the imitator will make a narrow four-clawed foot, instead of the three usual claws grasping the ball. This narrow foot is never found on an original tripod and is a design invented by the imitator to overcome his difficulty.

With regard to the tops of these tables, he will decorate the plain top with a carved pie-crust edge, which he will cut out of the solid wood. There is one characteristic, however, of the genuine circular top, and that is, that it will not be a true circle, the wood having shrunk across the grain :

it will therefore measure less across the grain than with it. The imitator, in converting this old top, will first of all send it to the turner, who will turn it out to the required depth, and in doing this he will also alter the outside shape of the edge, and thus make it an exact circle.

Many firescreens on tripod feet will be found with the pole cut off and a top added, thus converting them into tables. This practice first started in the nineteenth century when firescreens went out of use, and it is continued to-day because these tables are more valuable than the screens. It is generally possible to detect this alteration, as the section of the moulding which terminates the top of the stem of a table is different to that on a tripod firescreen.

The imitator does not copy the other articles of tripod furniture, because of the scarcity of plain examples of the tripod candle-stand and the small tripod table. The plain dumb waiter, although it exists in large numbers, is not sufficiently saleable to-day to pay him for carving it up.

Chests-with-Drawers and Tallboys.—Early chests-with-drawers and tallboys of this period are rare, most of the examples existing to-day dating from after 1750–1800. A few chests-with-drawers on stands, similar to the walnut examples, are found; but these are very unusual. Generally speaking, these articles of furniture in early mahogany hardly exist to-day. It would appear, as already stated, that the bedroom furniture of the middle classes up to 1735–40 was in walnut.

A mahogany 3-tier Dumb Waiter on tripod stand; the carving of the feathers and scaling is of high quality.
Circa 1735.

Fig. 72. Col. J.

A walnut Tripod Pole Screen, with shaped banner of *petit point* needlework.
Circa 1730.

Fig. 73. Col. C.

A mahogany Tripod Pole Screen, with panel of *petit point* needlework. (This is very exceptional, as the legs terminate in bears instead of the usual claw and ball.)
Circa 1740.

Fig. 74. Col. C.

A mahogany Tripod Table, with pie-crust top.
Circa 1750.

Fig. 75. Col. C.

A mahogany Tripod Table, with fret gallery top.
Circa 1760.

Fig. 76. Col. B.

A mahogany Tripod Table, with carved gallery top.
Circa 1745.

Fig. 77. Col. C.

A mahogany Tripod Table, with carved pie-crust top.
Circa 1755.

Fig. 78. Col. C.

A mahogany Stool, one of a pair.
Circa 1750.

Fig. 79. Col. C.

A mahogany circular Stool, one of a pair.
Circa 1735.

Fig. 80. Col. C.

A mahogany Settee (An unusual feature of this Settee is the single upright in the centre of the back.)
Circa 1745.

Fig. 81. Col. C.

CHAPTER IX

FURNITURE OF THE MIDDLE MAHOGANY PERIOD

1745–1770

HISTORICAL SURVEY

THIS period, which may be said to have begun shortly before 1745 and to have lasted until nearly 1770, originated in the taste for all things French. This soon affected the design of furniture, and in so doing extinguished the lingering traces of the quaintly dignified Queen Anne tradition, and also undermined and destroyed the severe and patrician classical style. Following closely upon this invasion of French ideas came the craze for Chinoiserie and the cult of the Gothic.

The design of furniture at this period was the expression of popular taste as interpreted by the cabinetmakers, and was not subject to the restraining hand of the architect-designers, as hitherto. All the cabinetmakers of this period, among whom were Thomas Chippendale, Edwards and Darley, Thomas Johnson, Lock and Copeland, Ince and Mayhew, and Robert Manwaring, turned their time and attention to following the foibles of the day, and producing furniture to please the capricious fancies of the public. It was the correct and customary thing at this period for a cabinetmaker of any mark to issue trade catalogues, and it is from copies that survive that these cabinetmakers and their designs are known to-day. From these designs it can be seen how they vied with each other in assimilating the French, Chinese, and Gothic notions, and in endeavouring to adapt and graft them on to their furniture.

The most prominent, and certainly the most celebrated to-day, of these men was Thomas Chippendale. His fame, however, cannot be said to rest on his powers as a creative artist ; but more on his commercial ability in catering for the variable taste of a large and fashionable clientele, by the production of furniture of a very high standard of workmanship. It has been stated that Chippendale was himself a carver of the highest quality, and that

some pieces were undoubtedly the work of his own hands. Most probably, about 1740, as a young man of twenty-three, he did work at the bench ; but when his business acumen brought him to the top of his trade, it is more likely that his time was occupied in directing his business ; and, also, that the majority of his designs were drawn and executed by artists in his employment. Those pieces which can be traced definitely to his workshop, through the original invoices relating to them being still in existence, show how exceptionally high was the quality of the cabinetwork and its decoration, whether by carving, inlaying, metal-mounting, or painting. Owing to the fact, however, that his designs, together with those of many other cabinet-makers, were published and consequently accessible to all, a great deal of furniture was made on lines similar to his own, so that it is impossible, in the absence of the invoices relating to them, to establish any personal connection between Chippendale and all the pieces which to-day pass under his name. It is a pure fallacy, though one often put forward, that Chippendale was a designer of all the furniture of this middle Mahogany period, and the maker of the greater part of it ; in reality, his name has become generic for all furniture made at this date, and it is in this sense that the term " Chippendale " should be understood. When this is realised, a popular misapprehension will cease to exist.

About 1765 to 1770, when the chaos of style of this period had reached a climax of extravagance, there came a reaction in favour of the classical style ; and the design of English furniture once again came under the control of an architect-designer, Robert Adam.

COLOUR AND PATINA

Pieces of mahogany of this period can be distinguished from those of the earlier period, as they were not originally treated with oil, but were slightly stained to equalise the colour, and then waxed ; consequently they have not the very dark brown tone of the earlier pieces.[1]

Many pieces have suffered at the hands of the French polisher, and in such cases the wood, instead of being a rich brown, has generally a red or yellow tone. Old, untouched mahogany never has this reddish tone, which is only found on modern mahogany and old pieces from which the original surface has been removed. Mahogany will become bleached if exposed to

[1] *E.g.* serpentine chest-with-drawers (Victoria and Albert Museum, W 133, 1919). There are, however many pieces of a dark colour made of the earlier Spanish or San Domingo mahogany during this period.

the sun ; but the bleached effect, which in extreme cases has a light grey tone, is not the added attraction that it is in the case of walnut.

DESIGN AND ORNAMENTATION

Except for the introduction of several pieces directly copied from French examples, the general lines of the furniture were not materially altered during this period, and it is only in the ornamentation that the change is revealed. The cabriole leg with the claw and ball foot went out of fashion, and was replaced by the light and elegant cabriole leg ending in a whorl or scroll toe, adapted from the contemporary French style. Chairs and tables in the Chinese taste had straight, square legs, connected by stretchers, similar to Fig. 89, the fashion for stretchers to legs being revived after a lapse of thirty-five to forty years.

The designs for furniture in the Chinese taste, as exemplified in the publications of such cabinetmakers as Chippendale, Ince and Mayhew, and Robert Manwaring, are for the most part extravagant and bad ; and it is fortunate that many of them, showing such superfluity of ornament, never appear to have been carried out.[1] The pieces in this taste that have survived are, in general, much modified from the designs in the books, and many of the examples uphold the high standard of design of English furniture, although it cannot be said that these Chinese pieces were ever so happy as those in the French style.

For furniture with Gothic ornamentation even less can be said than for that in the Chinese mode ; on such pieces as bookcases, it was in bad taste ; but when applied to chairs, it was still worse. The Gothic furniture, however, never became very popular, and pieces with this distinctive character are now seldom found.

Apart from pieces designed wholly in the Chinese taste, this taste shows itself in applied fret decoration on the friezes of bookcases and tables, and it is also found on the legs and rails of chairs. The chairs were made with square backs, which were also filled with a fret design. Tripod tables and centre tables of this period, as shown in Figs. 76 and 94, were designed with galleries of Chinese pierced fret. The tops of bookcases and cabinets were surmounted with pierced fret galleries similar to Figs. 83 and 84 ; in fact,

[1] It is possible that many of these elaborate pieces were made in softwood and japanned or gilt, as Chippendale, in his book, suggests this treatment for them. This might account for their not having survived, which they would probably have done if made in mahogany.

it may be said that this Chinese ornament was grafted on to pieces of furniture wherever it could be applied tastefully. Fret, either pierced or applied, of Gothic design was also employed.

WORKMANSHIP

In distinction from the methods of the early Mahogany period, veneering was more largely employed in this period than construction in the solid wood. Fronts of drawers and tops of tables were veneered with finely grained mahogany[1]—Cuban mahogany being generally used for the better class of furniture, and Honduras mahogany, which is a softer and more open-grained variety, for the unimportant and less prominent parts of pieces and for articles of a lower grade. Spanish mahogany, having little or no figure, was superseded as unsuitable for this purpose.

Finely marked veneer, obtained by cutting the mahogany in a manner similar to that used with the walnut, was again employed by the cabinet-maker for the purposes of decoration ; as with walnut, veneer cut from the root of a tree having a finer and more marked figure than that of the trunk.

The fret galleries to tables were made up of three layers of wood, glued together in such a way that the grain of the middle layer runs across the width of the fret and that of the outer layers with its length. This method of construction was specially adopted to give strength and to prevent warping.

In this period deal and pine were more often used for carcase work than oak ; the remarks in Chapter IV on Walnut Furniture about the use of deal and oak apply also to this period, especially with regard to drawers, a piece of high quality having oak-lined drawers, while an inferior quality piece would have drawers of deal or pine.

The quality of the carving in this period is very noticeable. The plainer pieces of the earlier years were without carving, but in furniture of this period decoration in the shape of applied fret is often found on pieces of inferior quality. The carving on these pieces is of a low standard as, being executed in the cheaper, softer, and more open-grained Honduras mahogany, the beautifully crisp and sharply cut work, peculiar to the harder and closer-grained San Domingo and Cuban woods, cannot be obtained. For examples of pieces with fine carving, see Figs. 82 and 94.

[1] See Fig. 98.

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In this period deal and pine were more often used for carcase work than oak; the remarks in Chapter IV on Walnut Furniture about the use of deal and oak apply also to this period, especially with regard to expensive pieces of high quality having oak-lined drawers, while an inferior piece would have drawers of deal or pine.

The quality of the carving in this period is very variable. The plainer pieces of the earlier years were without carving, but in furniture of this period decoration in the shape of applied carving is found on pieces of inferior quality. The carving on these pieces is of a low standard as, being executed in the cheaper, softer, and more open-grained Honduras mahogany, the beautifully crisp and sharply cut work peculiar to the harder and closer-grained San Domingo and Cuban wood cannot be obtained. For examples of pieces with fine carving, see Figs. [illegible] and 94.

[1] See Fig. 9.

A mahogany Bureau Cabinet, supported on squat lion paw feet. This is a very unusual feature and only found on fine quality pieces of walnut and mahogany furniture.

Circa 1740.

Fig. 83. Col. C.

A mahogany Wing Bookcase, exhibiting traces of architectural design, combined with the new Chinese and Gothic taste.

Circa 1745.

Fig. 84. Col. C.

FURNITURE OF THE MIDDLE MAHOGANY PERIOD

SPURIOUS FURNITURE

The remarks made in the previous chapter on spurious pieces of the early Mahogany period apply, in general, equally well to this period, especially those on open grain ; but with one exception, that in place of carved decoration for enhancing the value of plain pieces, the imitator uses the Chinese fret ornament. This type of ornament is much less costly than carving, and it can be much more extensively used for the decoration of plain surfaces, such as the friezes of cabinets and bookcases, legs of chairs and tables. There is one point, however, that should be mentioned in connection with the application of spurious fret ornament. On a piece of furniture such as the tallboy, the frieze is formed by the bottom moulding of the cornice and a small moulding fixed on the carcase. The sections of these mouldings above and below a plain frieze will not usually allow of the application of a fret so deep as the genuine old fret ; and the imitator, to keep within the projection of the lower members of the two mouldings, can only use a fret so shallow that it does not generally exceed $\frac{1}{32}$ of an inch. The difference between this spurious applied fret and the genuine fret, which is seldom less than $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch in depth, should be apparent. This modern applied fret is generally very shallow, as, wherever it is applied, whether on the friezes of tables and cabinets or on the canted corners of chests, there will always be the difficulty of the added thickness of the fret not being in accord with the contiguous mouldings or surrounding surfaces.

The old fret, being cut by hand with the saw, shows little irregularities and deviations from pattern ; the sides of the fret, for instance, will not be square with the face, and this is especially true of fret galleries to tables and pierced fret friezes. The modern fret, being cut in a machine, is always precise and accurate. To get the new fret decoration the required colour it is either stained or treated with acid and afterwards waxed, dark wax being well worked into the corners of the fret and allowed to remain there.

In the following notes dealing with various articles of furniture in this period will be found particulars of the pieces usually selected by the imitator for the addition of fret ornament and of his methods of applying it.

Chairs, Stools, and Settees.—As already explained, the cabriole leg with claw and ball foot of this period was superseded by the French cabriole

leg with whorl or scroll toe and a square straight leg with stretchers. This was the radical change in chairs, stools, and settees from the style of the previous period.[1] The cabinetmakers of this period also favoured upholstered backs to chairs and settees, similar to the contemporary French furniture. Examples of a chair and settee of this type are shown in Figs. 64 and 101. A chair which was an innovation of this period was the "ribbon-back chair," with its splat elaborately carved with a design of interlaced ribbons. Owing, however, to the elaborate carving necessitated in a chair of this design, it was a type that must have been very expensive to make, and was not therefore produced in large numbers; hence its great rarity to-day. Many spurious chairs of this pattern have been made of entirely new construction by the imitator. *In fact, it may be said that about 95 per cent. of the existing examples are spurious.* The best tests to apply to this type of chair are the "resiliency" test described, page 18, and the "shoe" test, page 44.

Chairs, stools, and settees in the Chinese taste are found with their legs sometimes plain and sometimes with fret decoration, either applied, as in the piece illustrated (Fig. 89), or carved out of the solid wood. As, however, the plain straight leg was far more extensively used at this period and later, many more examples of it exist to-day than of the decorated leg. The imitator enhances the value of these plain legs by applying fret ornament to them and piercing the stretchers; he does not carve the fret design out of the solid leg, as the work would be too expensive and by so doing he could not keep the original colour. The collector should therefore always make close examination of chairs with fret legs.

As chairs with cabriole legs are far more valuable than those with plain straight legs, a number of armchairs will be found with two genuine cabriole legs (generally taken from a chair with an upholstered back, which would not be of great value) substituted for their original plain ones. The difficulty that the imitator has to overcome is that the chair in its original form with plain straight legs had stretchers. With the new cabriole legs he cannot replace these; neither can he hide the marks in the back legs where the stretchers were originally mortised. He cannot very well supply new back legs, as this would involve renewing the side rails of the back, which are in one piece with the back legs. The collector should therefore, in purchasing

[1] Pieces with the former leg still continued to be made, however, in this period, as the division between styles was never abrupt.

chairs of this period with cabriole legs, always look carefully for any mortise marks of stretchers in the back legs.

Bureaux, Bureau Bookcases, and Cabinets.—The bureau of the last half of the eighteenth century must have been a very popular piece of furniture, since large numbers exist to-day. With regard to the bureau bookcase the most desirable type is that with glazed lattice doors, generally of geometrical, and sometimes of Gothic, design.[1] Another type was made with wood panels to the doors. These being unsaleable, however, the imitator converts them into the desirable variety by replacing the wooden panels by glazed lattice. In this alteration entirely new doors are sometimes provided, while in other cases the lattice is added to the existing door frame. In the latter method a difficulty arises owing to the fact that glazed lattice doors have narrower stiles than those with wooden panels. The stiles, therefore, have to be reduced in width by cutting away the inner sides of the frame; and examination should be made of the top and bottom edges of the doors to see whether the tenons overlap the glazing. These tenons always came right through the framing to the outer edges of the doors; if the bottom of the top tenon is below the level of the top edge of the glass, and the top of the bottom tenon is likewise above the level of the bottom edge of the glass, it will be evident that the stiles have been reduced, and that the piece originally had plain wooden panels. Besides this, a swan-neck pediment top will be added to the cornice; and the plain mouldings will be enriched with carving.

The wing bookcases of this period, similar to Figs. 84 and 99, have lost the architectural character and proportion of those of the previous period; the bottom part is higher, the design much lighter, and the mouldings are less heavy in section. Bookcases of this period are rare; and most of the existing wing bookcases date from the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The plain examples the imitator adapts by carving the mouldings, adding a fret to the frieze, panelling the doors of the lower portion with shaped carved panels, and decorating them with pateræ or rosettes. In this way he converts a plain example of the late eighteenth century into a "Chippendale" bookcase.

Cabinets or china cabinets, as in the periods already dealt with, are exceptionally rare. They were undoubtedly made at this period, as in the catalogues of the cabinetmakers many elaborate designs for them, especially in the Chinese taste, are shown. It should be noted that a cabinet made

[1] As examples of geometrical and Gothic lattice doors see the bookcases shown in Figs. 99 and 84.

specially for the display of china was made at this period with sides glazed like the front. By this they can be distinguished from bookcases.

While spurious china cabinets of this period are not so often made to-day by the imitator as the walnut china cabinet, for which there is a greater demand, there are a number of spurious examples in existence which, from their design, appear to have been copied direct from the old designs in the trade catalogues of Chippendale and other cabinetmakers.

In addition to these spurious china cabinets the imitator makes small cabinets on stands with pagoda tops, and also a type of open stand, formed with two or three tiers and elaborately carved with ornament in the Chinese taste. These pieces undoubtedly were originally intended to be made, as already mentioned, in softwood, either lacquered or gilt; and not in mahogany, like the present-day imitations.

The collector, when he comes across a china cabinet purporting to be of this period, similar to those described above, should doubt its authenticity and carefully examine it.

Another favourite article of the imitator is the hanging wall cabinet for the display of china. These spurious examples are sometimes carved with pagoda tops and grotesque masks in the Chinese taste. The genuine examples usually met with are of plain design with mahogany shelves fitted into pierced fret sides, either in the Chinese or Gothic taste.

All these imitations are generally made from old material, the freshly cut and carved surfaces being treated with acids to obtain the right colour; they are then French polished and waxed, as already described in Chapter II. Their appearance, generally, is not reassuring, as the surface of the wood has an even, dead appearance, only relieved by the dirtied wax which is rubbed into the crevices. The gloss on the surface is an artificial one caused through the application of French polish to fill up the open grain; it is not the gloss of the bare mahogany, which can only be obtained through constant rubbing and dusting over a long period.

Tables, Card Tables, and Urn Stands.—The tripod table of the earlier Mahogany period was made in considerable numbers during this period, the claw and ball foot giving way to the French scroll or whorl toe, and the pie-crust to the pierced gallery top shown in Fig. 76. The gallery top, like the pie-crust top, is much copied by the imitator; especially since it can be made out of a piece of old mahogany with its original surface, the fret gallery alone being new. A peculiarity of an original fret gallery is that

the middle layer of the three-ply fret will project slightly above the two outside layers. The reason for this is that the outside layers being placed with their grain lengthways have shrunk across the grain, whereas the middle layer having its grain vertical has not shrunk and therefore projects slightly. The shrinkage, owing to the narrowness of the gallery, will be very slight, but still perceptible if the finger is passed along the edge of the top. Careful examination of a spurious fret gallery will show all the signs of recent manufacture. On an original gallery the inside of the fret will be hard and encrusted with dust, whereas the dirtied wax or stain applied to the inside of the modern fret can be rubbed off with a handkerchief, disclosing the light colour of the freshly cut wood. Some of the original fret galleries have been restored with new lengths of fret; but careful examination will disclose the differing qualities of the old and new work.

The centre table with fret gallery similar to Fig. 94, but with straight fretted legs connected by pierced cross-stretchers in the Chinese taste, is a great rarity, much sought after at the present time. Owing to the fragile nature of the pierced gallery and stretchers, examples are often found defective in these respects.

Another innovation at this period is the small urn stand, generally about 2 ft. 6 in. in height, with a square top. Fine examples of these stands have their legs and friezes decorated with applied fret ornament, and have fret galleries and pierced stretchers similar to the centre tables. Owing to the rarity of the centre and urn tables with fret decoration, the imitator makes spurious specimens either by applying new fret decoration, galleries, and stretchers to plain examples, or by making imitations of new construction. The former can always be recognised by the thinness of the fret decoration, as all genuine examples have a deep-cut fret.

Card tables of this period, like the chairs, are either found with the French cabriole leg ending in a whorl toe or with straight legs decorated with fret. Many plain examples exist of the latter type which the imitator has decorated in a way similar to that already described. Fine examples of card tables of this period invariably have serpentine tops, the edges of which are decorated with carving.

Commodes.—The commode, generally with serpentine front, and doors enclosing a cupboard, or with drawers, as in Fig. 98, is a piece of furniture which the cabinetmakers of this period adapted from the French article of the same name. Commodes are much sought after by collectors, not only

because they are rare and of fine quality, but because they are pieces specially suitable for reception-rooms.[1] This refers particularly to the commode with cupboard doors; those with drawers, though more often found, are not so highly prized. One of the chief decorative features of the commodes with drawers are the canted corners, which on fine examples are decorated with carving, as shown in Fig. 98. This piece of furniture is much favoured by the imitator, and plain examples with canted corners are eagerly purchased by him, so that he can "carve-up" the mouldings and decorate the faces of the corners with applied carving, generally of flowers in high relief. He is also helped in making spurious commodes by the fact that there is a certain type of chest with drawers of the early nineteenth century with a serpentine front but with square instead of canted corners, as the serpentine shape stops about two or three inches from the ends. The imitator can easily adapt this type of chest into a commode by converting the square corners into canted ones. He will also shape the straight sides of the chest like those of a commode. By this adaptation he increases the value of a piece worth about £10 up to about £150 at an outlay of about £10 or £15.

Bedroom Furniture.—Pieces of furniture, such as chests-with-drawers, wardrobes, tallboys, and dressing tables of this middle period of mahogany, are by no means plentiful to-day, as most existing examples date from the last quarter of the century. The piece most frequently met with is the tallboy decorated with Chinese fret on the canted corners and frieze, similar to Fig. 88. The ogee bracket foot shown on this piece was introduced by cabinetmakers of this period; this type of foot is generally found only on examples of high quality, to which it adds importance and value, especially if decorated with carving. The ordinary straight bracket foot, however, similar to Fig. 36, is more frequently met with.

The tallboy is one of the favourite articles which the imitator decorates with his spurious fret, as a very large quantity of plain tallboys, dating from the late eighteenth century, have survived. The collector should, therefore, always be suspicious of tallboys decorated with shallow fret.

Besides the tallboy of this period there are also chests-with-drawers with serpentine fronts. The examples with shaped instead of straight sides are the more valuable. The serpentine-fronted chest-with-drawers must

[1] Although this piece with drawers is termed a commode, originally it was no doubt intended as a piece of bedroom furniture.

A mahogany Tallboy, showing by the design of the handles and the fret decoration on the canted corners and frieze the influence of the Chinese taste.
Circa 1755.

Fig. 88. Col. C.

A mahogany Chair, showing influence of Chinese taste in the legs and stretchers.
Circa 1760.

Fig. 89. Col. N.

A mahogany Corner Armchair, with all four legs cabriole, and ending in claw and ball feet.
Circa 1750.

Fig. 90. Col. C.

A mahogany Reading Stand.
Circa 1760.

Fig. 91. Col. C.

A mahogany Dressing Table, with ogee bracket feet and serpentine front.
Circa 1750.

Fig. 92. Col C.

A mahogany Card Table, with architectural frieze, edge of the top carved with rose and ribbon ornament.
Circa 1740.

Fig. 93. Col. C.

A mahogany Centre Table, with cabriole legs, ending in claw and ball feet.
Circa 1750.

Fig. 94. Col. C.

not be confused, however, with the commode with drawers ; the latter is generally longer and lower.

The dressing table of the period, similar to those illustrated, Figs. 95 and 96, is very rare. Chippendale in his trade catalogue shows pieces very similar in design to that seen in Fig. 95.

The wardrobe (generally known to-day as the "gentleman's wardrobe"), with an upper part containing open trays enclosed by cupboard doors, and a bottom part consisting of drawers, was made in very large numbers during the latter part of the eighteenth century, but the early examples dating from the middle of the century are now much scarcer. The most valuable wardrobes have serpentine fronts with canted corners decorated with fret ornament, which is sometimes applied and sometimes carved out of the solid wood. The more ordinary type of wardrobe has a straight front and panelled doors to the upper part. Although of excellent workmanship it is not much in demand ; the hanging type of wardrobe, *i.e.* with long cupboard doors and no drawers underneath, is more sought after, being more convenient for modern requirements. This hanging wardrobe from its great scarcity to-day appears to have been made but seldom in the eighteenth century ; and owing to its being in great demand to-day, is much imitated, generally of new construction from old mahogany. When a genuine example is met with it is usually of very plain design and poor workmanship. These the imitator enhances in value by the addition of pediment tops and by converting the square corners of the door panels to shaped corners with carved rosettes. He will also adapt mahogany wardrobes of a good colour, dating from the early part of the nineteenth century, into spurious examples of the so-called "Chippendale" hanging wardrobe of the middle eighteenth century. This he affects by altering the section of the mouldings and decorating the doors with rosettes and shaped panels. All these adaptations can be detected by careful examination of the mouldings and carving for any sign of open grain or French polish.

CHAPTER X

LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY FURNITURE

1765–1800

HISTORICAL SURVEY

ABOUT 1765, when the current rococo and baroque extravagances had begun to pall upon the public taste, England, not for the first time, looked to France for inspiration and new ideas. At this time France was experiencing a return to purer classicism, both in architecture and decoration, and the florid style of Louis Quinze was yielding to the more restrained and chaste lines of that of Louis Seize. The first signs of this classical reaction in England can be traced in the sporadic efforts of certain dilettanti and amateurs, but it remained for two brothers to create a real interest in this revival and ensure its success. Sons of a Scotch architect, Robert and James Adam were born and brought up in an atmosphere of art, and while endowed with taste, talent, and inventive genius, they were not lacking in the more material qualities of enterprise, foresight, and determination. To this combination of the artistic and the practical their deservedly great reputation must be attributed.

About 1754, Robert Adam left England on a tour through France and Italy, where he studied and made numerous drawings of Roman remains. In one respect—and that, in the light of his future activities, a very significant one—his attitude differed from that of most architects who travelled on the Continent in search of knowledge and inspiration : he noticed the effects and apparent results of the classical revival which was taking place around him, and, adapting his imagination to modern possibilities, he contemplated the architectural remains he visited, not merely with a view to reproducing their essential rules and salient features in public buildings, but also with the idea of applying them to private houses. On his return to England about 1758, Robert set up in business with his brother James, and the famous firm of R. & J. Adam entered upon its prosperous and influential career.

A mahogany Dressing Table, with shaped front. Edge of top decorated with gadrooned moulding.
Circa 1760.

Fig. 95. Col. D.

Mahogany Dressing Table.
Circa 1745.

Fig. 96. Col. M.

HISTORICAL SURVEY

One of the most distinctive features of the work of Robert Adam was its versatility, for he would design not only a house but everything in it, even down to the fenders and fireirons. As, however, he was first and foremost an architect, his efforts in furniture design were limited to what he required for his own work—in other words, for the houses he himself designed or decorated ; consequently, the amount of furniture of his design existing to-day is not large. But so strong and individual was his taste that he succeeded in creating a style which was followed and imitated by cabinet-makers and designers, and in this way the Adam style of design came into existence. Whether he actually created a style or, what is more likely, discovered, encouraged, and directed a tendency, may be open to discussion ; but it is certain that he had the foresight to estimate the trend of public taste, and the ability to formulate and establish it on definite, permanent lines. His distinctive personality so strongly pervaded his work that the name of Adam will always be associated with the architecture, interior decoration, and furniture of the last thirty-five or forty years of the eighteenth century.

Amongst the cabinetmakers who not only made furniture from Adam's individual designs, but also made pieces in the Adam style, may be mentioned the firm of Chippendale—a fact which again tends to prove that Thomas Chippendale was not a creative artist, but the ingenious servant of the current fashion.

In addition to Chippendale, other followers of the new Adam style, besides the surviving cabinetmakers of the previous period, were Thomas Shearer, the Lancashire firm of Gillow, who at this time opened a workshop in London, and Seddon, Sons & Shackleton.

Two other notable personalities of this period were George Hepple-white, a cabinetmaker and designer, and Thomas Sheraton, a designer and a teacher of drawing. The designs of these two men, whilst owing their origin to the Adam and French styles, strike a distinctive note in the development of the style of furniture at this period. George Hepple-white is best known to-day by the elegant oval and shield back chairs and settees produced by his own firm and many other lesser cabinetmakers from the designs in his firm's catalogue. Thomas Sheraton, on the other hand, was a most versatile designer of furniture, and was specially noted for his designs of such articles as ladies' work tables, dressing tables, and bijou pieces. He was also noted for the making of furniture with ingenious mechanical contrivances.

At the close of the eighteenth century the French Empire style began to be noticed by English furniture designers such as Sheraton. The chief exponent, however, was Thomas Hope, who published a book of his designs early in the nineteenth century. The Empire style was born of the French Revolution. Revolutions begin by being iconoclastic ; then comes a period of mingled torpor, indecision, experiment, compromise, and extravagance. Out of this chaos was evolved the French Empire, and with it came the French Empire style. Exhausted France borrowed the artistic strength of Greece and Rome, and draped it in muslin and gossamer.

With the introduction of this decadent period, the history of English furniture, which has been traced through three hundred years, may be brought fitly to a close. Throughout these years, though almost invariably susceptible to foreign influences, the design of English furniture consistently retained a certain degree of native character ; it rather adapted than borrowed, and improved more than it copied. After this date, though the decadent Empire style was eventually discarded, no new artistic development is to be found ; whether the growing intimacy and intercourse between nations, leading inevitably to the birth of collectivism and the death of individualism, is the reason, it is beyond the scope of this book to inquire.

COLOUR AND PATINA

The colour and patina of mahogany furniture of this period are similar in most respects to those of the furniture dating from the middle of the century. A large number of pieces of this date have, however, been French polished ; and these examples can be recognised to-day by their highly polished surfaces and their yellow and reddish-brown tone.

The satinwood used for furniture in the late eighteenth century was a variety which came from the East Indies, and was very hard and close-grained. An example of the figure and grain is shown on the top of the commode illustrated, Fig. 106. This East Indian satinwood, when found on genuine pieces to-day, is a golden-orange colour, and good examples of it are the Knife Box, 311, 1880, and the Escritoire Bookcase, W 89, 1910, at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. This eighteenth century satinwood furniture was varnished when first made; the varnish used was very thin and transparent, and gives the surface a soft, mellowed appearance. Another variety of satinwood came from the West Indies ; this, however,

had a more open grain, and was not introduced into England for furniture making until the nineteenth century. Unlike the East Indian satinwood, the veneer was knife-cut and not saw-cut, and in consequence is much thinner. This satinwood has a more regular and straight grain (see Fig. 108), and is of a yellower tone in comparison to the golden colour of the East Indian variety.

DESIGN AND ORNAMENTATION

The cabinetmakers and designers of this period closely followed the design of the contemporary French furniture ; they also copied the French methods of decoration, such as metal mounting and the more liberal choice of figured woods for veneer and inlay, and even adopted French names for their furniture—as, for example, bergère, fauteuil, commode, escritoire, and secretaire.

The furniture of this period was made in mahogany and satinwood, also softwood, the last being either painted or gilt, or sometimes japanned. From the various types of furniture found in these woods it would appear that the fashionable furniture for reception-rooms or salons was made in satinwood and softwood. The dining-room and library furniture was mostly made in mahogany, and the bedroom furniture sometimes in mahogany and sometimes in softwood, painted or japanned. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule, as a satinwood wardrobe and sideboard are not unknown, and mahogany pieces were made which, from their refined and elegant design, could only have been intended for use in the salon ; but it was evidently the fashion in the late eighteenth century for the well-to-do to furnish their rooms in this manner. From this rough classification the collector will get some general idea of the types of furniture he is likely to meet with in the various woods, and it will also explain the scarcity of various articles of furniture in satinwood, and how difficult it would be, to-day, to furnish a bedroom in genuine old satinwood. In this period many new articles of furniture were introduced by the cabinetmakers, one of the principal being the sideboard, while others were ladies' work tables, small writing tables on tapered legs, sofa tables, and cheval glasses.

The methods employed for the decoration of this furniture were many. Pieces were veneered with fine figured varieties of mahogany and satinwood ; harewood was also used for veneer or inlay, and for the latter purpose other choice coloured or figured woods, such as kingwood, zebra-wood, snake-

wood, amboyna, burr walnut, rosewood, and boxwood, were laid under contribution.

Painting was a favourite method for the decoration of satinwood, and it is said that Robert Adam was largely responsible for its introduction. For painting panels on walls and ceilings he employed Angelica Kauffmann and her husband, Antonio Zucchi, also Pergolesi and Cipriani, and these artists, Angelica Kauffmann in particular, also decorated with paintings a number of pieces of furniture made from his designs. Most existing examples of painted satinwood, however, must have been decorated by artists of considerably less merit, or even by amateurs, as the painting of furniture was a fashionable pursuit at this period. The design of the painted decoration took the form of flowers and ornamental borders, but in more important pieces the doors of cabinets and commodes would be decorated with oval, round, or rectangular medallions, after pictures by Angelica Kauffmann and Cipriani, and designs by Pergolesi. Sometimes tables had their tops fitted with a sheet of copper on which was painted a medallion, usually of figures or landscape on a coloured ground, generally of cream, pink, apple green, or yellow. The legs and friezes of these tables would be of softwood, carved and gilt, similar to Fig. 103. Cabinets and commodes were also made, generally painted cream or apple green, the doors and panels being decorated with medallions of figure subjects, sometimes in grisaille. These pieces were generally made of mahogany and not softwood, and the panels of the doors would be fitted with thin sheets of copper. Metal mounts were sometimes used on commodes and other pieces of furniture, but this mode of decoration was never as widely used in England as in France. Robert Adam, however, greatly favoured the use of finely chased and gilt mounts, and, for making those on furniture of his own design, employed French craftsmen specially brought to England.

As the greater portion of the furniture of this period was veneered, and decorated with inlay or painting, carving was confined generally to chairs and settees, which were made in the solid wood.[1] Two or more methods of decoration were often employed in the ornamentation of one piece, such as inlay and metal mounting, or painted and inlaid decoration combined with gilding.

The most popular motif of design was the honeysuckle, which held a position in the late eighteenth century equivalent to that of the escallop shell in the Queen Anne period. Originally employed by the Adam

[1] This applies to mahogany, as satinwood is very seldom found carved.

A mahogany Commode.
Circa 1745.

Fig. 97. Col. C.

A mahogany Commode, with serpentine front on ogee bracket feet.
Circa 1760.

Fig. 98. Col. P.

Brothers, it was extensively copied by lesser designers and cabinetmakers, and is found on all types of furniture from 1770 to 1800, either carved on chairs, inlaid or painted on satinwood, or carved in softwood and gilt; it was also widely used in interior decoration and for silver and metal work.

Owing to exigencies of space, it is not possible, except on very general lines, to deal with the large quantity of furniture produced in this period, or the many and varied designs in which it was made. The notes at the end of this chapter, dealing with various articles of furniture, have therefore been confined to a consideration of the genuine articles that the collector is most likely to meet with, the types that are rare and valuable, and those pieces of which spurious copies are most likely to be found, or which the imitator will "improve" to increase their value.

WORKMANSHIP

As may be gathered from the brief description already given of the furniture of this period, it is impossible to detail all the various methods of construction that the cabinetmakers employed; but the following remarks concerning the use of different woods for the making of the carcases and drawers of furniture veneered with mahogany and satinwood will be of interest.

The carcases of pieces of satinwood furniture of high quality were made of mahogany, and pine carcases will only be found in the cheaper and lower grade pieces.[1] Oak is not so often found, perhaps owing to its having been scarcer and more expensive than the ordinary kinds of mahogany. The drawers of satinwood furniture are invariably made in mahogany, and mahogany furniture of the later period of the eighteenth century is found with the drawers lined with oak (or sometimes with mahogany), except in inferior pieces, when pine was more often used. The bottoms of drawers of the late eighteenth century furniture were made in two pieces fixed in grooved fillets at the sides and a double grooved fillet in the middle, and these fillets, inside the drawer, project above the bottom. In small drawers the middle fillet was dispensed with. Veneered mahogany furniture of this period is found with the carcase generally of pine but sometimes of

[1] The reason for this is, that if veneered on softwood, such as pine or deal, the saw-cut East Indian satinwood, owing to its superior strength, would cause the carcase-wood to warp.

deal. Wardrobes also were often made with their carcases of cedar, as were the drawers of wardrobes and chests-with-drawers. It will thus be seen how varied were the woods used for the making of carcases in this period. The choice does not appear to have been determined so much by the cost as by the nature of the article, especially as regards lining of drawers. For instance, the drawers of sideboards are invariably found to be made of oak in the high quality examples and of pine in inferior ones, but they are hardly ever found made of mahogany.

It may be said that the furniture of this period was on the whole of a very high standard of workmanship, but as in every period of English furniture pieces will be found of a lower grade and cheaper variety, so, in the inferior mahogany furniture of this period, the omission of cross-banded veneered edges on the tops of sideboards and tables and drawer fronts and of legs of tables and sideboards will be noticed. In good quality examples these edges will be cross-banded in tulip wood or kingwood, whereas in the lower grade furniture they will be simply decorated with a line of boxwood.

A quantity of mahogany furniture, such as sideboards and chests-with-drawers, is met with to-day with the tops and drawer fronts decorated with a banding, about an inch in width, of West Indian satinwood; these pieces, it would seem, were decorated in this manner a number of years after they were made in order to relieve their otherwise plain appearance; they are generally of poor quality mahogany and not worth the attention of the collector.

All the above points concerning the quality of pieces of furniture of this period should be borne in mind by the collector in estimating the present-day value of such pieces.

SPURIOUS FURNITURE

There is no great inducement for the imitator to make imitations of mahogany furniture of this period, as, with one or two exceptions, it is by no means so valuable as that of the previous period. He therefore enhances the plain mahogany pieces of this period by the addition of ornament, so that they may be mistaken by the uninitiated for examples of "Chippendale." As, however, within recent years plain mahogany furniture of the late eighteenth century has become scarce, the imitator is forced to fall back upon early nineteenth century pieces for these conversions.

Satinwood furniture, however, is a different matter, for old satinwood pieces which date from this period are highly prized and much sought after ; therefore spurious pieces of new construction, as well as old pieces improved in value by modern inlay or painting, will frequently be met with. As supplies of East Indian satinwood are still obtainable, spurious reproductions of the best class are veneered with this wood on a carcase of mahogany. The veneer, which is saw-cut like the old, is treated with acid to bleach it to the colour of the genuine old satinwood, an alkali wash being employed to stop the action and eliminate the acid when the right colour has been obtained. The piece, after being veneered, is completed by a very thin coating of light French polish, made from the white shellacs, very little "rubbing down" being done ; this thin coating of the polish being equivalent to the thin coatings of transparent varnish with which the old satinwood was finished. If the piece is to have painted decoration, a priming coat will be put on the wood where required to give a key to the paint, and the decoration is covered with a thin protective coat of polish before the general finishing coat is applied. In this class of spurious piece, satinwood in the solid may be used for the legs, but they are more likely to be made of birch, as mentioned below.

The majority of the spurious satinwood pieces of an inferior class are made with pine carcases veneered with the later West Indian satinwood, which, as already stated, has not the close grain of the earlier variety, and has a brighter yellow colour.

A quantity of spurious satinwood chairs have been made of birch, which has a close grain like that of East Indian satinwood, and can be stained and polished to a near resemblance to the genuine old satinwood. Birch, being very suitable for work in the solid, is used, generally, for legs of spurious pieces, unless they are veneered.

The imitator has made many successful copies, chiefly of china cabinets ; these being much in demand, and genuine examples being very rare, best repay him for his work. The detection of this spurious satinwood is by no means easy. A close study of the grain and colour of genuine old satinwood will help the collector most, as a knowledge of these qualities will enable him to recognise all pieces of the West Indian satinwood, that was not used for furniture until the nineteenth century. The modern pieces, however, of East Indian wood will have a yellow and bright tone compared with that of the old satinwood, and if the piece is decorated with painting, particular attention should be paid to the character of this work, as described later.

Besides these pieces of new construction, the imitator will veneer the surfaces of old mahogany pieces. These imitations will be more difficult to detect, as the carcase of the piece will be genuine ; but, again, as in the entirely new imitation, the colour of the satinwood will be the collector's greatest safeguard. Spurious pieces which will be far more difficult for the collector to recognise, are those pieces of genuine old satinwood which have had their value increased—in many cases doubly and trebly—by the addition of painted or inlaid decoration.

When the embellishment is to take the form of painting, the design is painted on the old surface and the whole piece thinly French polished, as previously described. The imitator generally errs by making the design of the new painted decoration too elaborate and important for the piece. On most of the old satinwood pieces decorated with painting, the design is simple and in keeping with the character of the piece ; it was only on important pieces that the old cabinetmakers indulged in elaborate designs. The imitator, in order to vary his designs of painted decoration, will also copy pastoral scenes after the eighteenth century French artists, Watteau and Fragonard, and conceive designs of cupids, bouquets of flowers and ribbons in the French style, which are entirely out of keeping with the character of the furniture, and which the eighteenth century cabinetmaker would never have been guilty of applying. Generally the effect of this modern painting is dull and unconvincing and seems to be foreign to the piece ; it has not the thin, clear brilliancy of the original painting (see Fig. 103). The reason for this is, that the paint is applied too thickly, and consequently has not the bright, clear colouring which is characteristic of the genuine painting on old pieces. The imitator, in order to give an antique appearance to his newly painted work, whether it is on an old piece or a piece of new construction, cracks the surface of the decoration by exposure to strong sunlight, and also by the application of paste, as in the case of spurious lacquer, see p. 59.

Besides painting, the imitator will add decoration to genuine examples with new inlay work. This new inlay will be cut in the surface of the old satinwood veneer and scraped down to the general level ; but as the glue dries and contracts, so the newly inlaid wood will gradually sink to a concave surface and can thus be detected.

One peculiarity about old satinwood furniture is that owing to the shrinkage of the wood of the carcase the satinwood veneer will be found cracked ; this is specially noticeable on the tops of Pembroke tables, on the sides of cabinets, and on the doors of commodes.

A mahogany Wing Bookcase, with rare pagoda-top moulding above lower portion.
Circa 1765.

Fig. 99. Col. N.

A four chair back mahogany Settee, backs decorated with carved design of honeysuckle, legs and arms in the French taste.
Circa 1780

Fig. 100. Col. D.

A mahogany Settee, with unusual carved cresting to top.
Circa 1765.

Fig. 101. Col. C.

CHAIRS, SETTEES, AND SOFAS

Another type of imitation of furniture of this period, which the imitator extensively produces, is the painted furniture already described on p. 100. These imitations are generally of commodes or cabinets decorated, as a rule, with backgrounds of cream, apple green, or yellow, relieved by gilt mouldings and oval or circular medallions painted with classical subjects. As already mentioned, the imitator obtains the appearance of age on a painted surface very successfully by French polish, which he afterwards cracks artificially by heat or otherwise. The great rarity of pieces such as commodes and cabinets, in this type of painted furniture of the late eighteenth century, should be sufficient to place the collector on his guard, and prevent him from paying, for a spurious piece, the price of a genuine one.

Another type of satinwood and mahogany furniture of which the collector should beware includes the fifty- or sixty-year-old reproductions of late eighteenth century examples, which were extensively made by several firms, foremost among whom was that of Wright & Mansfield. Besides mahogany furniture, examples in satinwood were extensively reproduced, and these, owing to their certain age, bear a close resemblance to the original eighteenth century pieces ; they differ, however, in the following important respects. The carcases of these pieces will invariably be made of pine and not mahogany, as they will be veneered with knife-cut West Indian and not saw-cut East Indian satinwood, and, this veneer being thin, there is less danger of the carcase warping. There is therefore no necessity of going to the expense of mahogany. The grain will be different and the colour brighter ; and, like the modern imitations of to-day, the surface will be French polished, not varnished.

Chairs, Settees, and Sofas.—The mahogany chairs in the earlier part of this period have oval or shield-shaped backs carved with various motifs, such as the Prince of Wales' feathers, wheat-ears, honeysuckle, and drapery. Towards the end of the century the shield and oval backs were superseded by a square back ; this latter type continued into the early part of the nineteenth century, when the tapered leg was replaced by a turned one. The earlier type of chair with the oval or shield back is popularly known to-day as "Hepplewhite," and the square back chair as "Sheraton," from the fact that these respective types were illustrated in the books published by these designers. Both types of chair were made originally for the dining-room in sets of six, eight, or ten single, and two armchairs ; but the oval or shield backs, which are the rarer and the more highly prized, are not often

met with in sets, and it is sets of the so-called "Sheraton" chairs that are most usually found to-day. The chairs with the plain turned legs are less valuable than those which have their legs tapered.

Besides these mahogany chairs, beech chairs painted and gilt were also made in large numbers, generally very French in design with oval upholstered backs and turned fluted legs. Chairs of this type were much favoured in the late eighteenth century for the salon or reception-room, being in keeping with the satinwood; to-day, however, they are very seldom found with their original gilding. Satinwood chairs were also favoured, but being made from the solid wood, they must have been costly;[1] and this undoubtedly accounts for the fact that very few are extant to-day. They are invariably decorated with painting, and a good example of a satinwood armchair is illustrated in Fig. 102. Many imitations of these satinwood chairs have been made, but the modern copy is very much lighter in weight than the genuine example, which is always surprisingly heavy.

Mahogany and satinwood settees were made with their backs similar to the chairs; generally they were designed with four or five chair-backs and not with the two or three chair-backs of the earlier settees. An example of a four-back mahogany settee of this period is illustrated, Fig. 100. The more usual type of settee or sofa of this period is that with the upholstered back. These were made of varying design, but the most desirable to-day are those with shaped backs, enclosed by a carved mahogany moulding, and with turned and fluted legs. A later type have square backs and plain turned legs.

Secretaires and Writing Tables.—The secretaire bookcase, which replaced the bureau bookcase about 1775, had drawers in the lower part, of which the top one took the place of the bureau slope, and when pulled out and its front let down disclosed a space for writing, with pigeon-holes and drawers at the back. The upper part, as in the bureau bookcase, had either glazed lattice doors or wood panelled doors.

This piece of furniture was also made without the top part, the accommodation being equivalent to that of the bureau; but as bureaux of this period exist in much greater numbers to-day, this secretaire without a top part does not seem to have been very popular. Secretaire bookcases

[1] A proof of the cost of these satinwood chairs is provided by the fact that contemporary imitations were made in painted birch; the collector should be careful not to mistake these old imitations in birch for the rare satinwood examples.

were usually made in mahogany, but examples, decorated with inlay or painting, are also found in satinwood, in which material the bureau and the bureau bookcase are hardly ever met with. From this it may be deduced that the secretaire was the new fashionable writing cabinet of the period.

Several other types of writing tables were made in the late eighteenth century, of which one was a small dainty table about 3 ft. in width, made both in mahogany and satinwood, and sometimes in harewood, with tapered legs and a top fitted with a tambour slide which could be drawn over, so as to enclose the writing space.

Another type of writing table on legs is that known as the "Carlton" table. It has the writing space surrounded at the back and two sides by a tier of small cupboards, drawers, and pigeon-holes, and is found both in mahogany and satinwood, but genuine period examples are to-day very rare. A large number of reproductions, however, were made in the nineteenth century, and many spurious copies are made to-day.

Fine specimens of pedestal writing tables of this date are just as rare as those of the earlier period. One of the finest examples extant was made, after Robert Adam's design, by Chippendale & Haig in 1773 for Edwin Lascelles; it is of large size, decorated with inlay of choice woods and mounted with chased and gilt metal mounts. Pedestal tables of this description were made for the library in the large houses belonging to the nobility and wealthy classes, and it naturally follows that examples of this kind are very small in number.

The ordinary type of mahogany pedestal writing table of the late eighteenth century is quite plain in character, showing that it was made for use in offices and other utilitarian purposes. The imitator enhances the value of these plain tables by carving their mouldings and applying other carved ornaments, and so turning them into elaborate examples of "Chippendale."

Bookcases.—The design of bookcases altered very little from that of the preceding period, except that the wing bookcase of the late eighteenth century was decorated with inlay instead of carving, and sometimes the lattice of the glazed doors was square in section and decorated with cross-banded veneer.

Dwarf bookcases with glazed doors were not made in the eighteenth century, as the earliest examples extant date from the early nineteenth century. Owing to the demand for this type of bookcase many imitations

have been made, sometimes composed of the upper part of a wing bookcase or a secretaire bookcase; the collector, therefore, in search of such a piece should realise that the only genuine specimen he is likely to find will date from the nineteenth century.

TABLES.—A number of small tables were made at this time as tea tables. The type known as the "Pembroke" table was a great favourite for this purpose, and generally had a square or oval top formed of three leaves, the two drop leaves being supported by small winged brackets hinged on to the framework, and the legs being, in the most usual type, tapered, but sometimes round and fluted. Besides mahogany examples of this table, a number were made of satinwood, as a rule undecorated except for tulip wood or kingwood bandings to the legs and top. Those with painted or inlaid decoration are much rarer, although painted decoration is often added to plain examples by the imitator. Sometimes these Pembroke tables are found as small as 14 to 16 in. across the top, in which case they are more highly prized to-day. The best and earliest examples have their legs connected by carved crossed stretchers, centred, where the stretchers join in the middle, by a carved or turned finial. Another feature of their design which improves their present-day value is a serpentine edge.

Besides the Pembroke, another type of tea table much desired by modern collectors is the mahogany spider-leg gate table, with a rectangular top, the two side flaps being supported by legs, which pull out in a manner similar to the oak gate-leg table. The slender legs are turned, and, in the best examples, terminate in small club feet; the tops are in solid mahogany and not veneered. Many of these tables unfortunately have been French polished, and those with their original patina are much more highly valued.

The spider-leg type of furniture also includes the much-sought-after nest or set of small tables, consisting of four tables, graduated in size to fit into one another. These have rectangular tops supported by four legs, and are mostly found in mahogany, genuine examples in satinwood being very rare. A set usually comprises four tables, and if two or three only are met with, the set is imperfect. If the table of least size in a set has grooves in the framework under the top, it is an indication that a still smaller table fitting these grooves is missing. Later examples of these sets of tables, dating from the early nineteenth century, have stouter legs with more elaborate turning, and are made in rosewood; but these late examples are not by any means so valuable as the earlier ones in mahogany.

A satinwood Armchair, with painted decoration.
Circa 1780.

Fig. 102. Col. K.

One of a pair of Sidetables, with satinwood top decorated with painting, and carved and gilt underframing and legs.
Circa 1780.

Fig. 103. Col. K

A gilt Sidetable, with scagliola top, designed by Robert Adam.
Circa 1770.

Fig. 104. Col. H.

A mahogany Sidetable, designed by Robert Adam.
Circa 1770.

Fig. 105. Col. H.

The urn table of this period has the top either oval, square, or serpentine, supported sometimes by tapered legs and sometimes by turned fluted legs; and, like the Pembroke table, though usually of mahogany, will be met with occasionally in satinwood. Of the numerous other small tables dating from this period the lady's work table, which is found of varying design, and generally in satinwood, may be mentioned. Combined dressing and writing tables were also made in satinwood, and towards the end of the century a quantity of dainty and graceful but rather effeminate furniture of this type must have been made, generally in satinwood, with inlaid or painted decoration, but sometimes in harewood.

Side Tables.—Side tables of the late eighteenth century were of two kinds: in mahogany for the dining-room, and in satinwood for the reception-room or salon. The best example of the mahogany side table is that with the serpentine-shaped front, the frieze generally being decorated with fluting on either side of a centre plaque, and the legs being tapered and either plain or fluted. The plaque was sometimes ornamented with a carved design representing an urn or swags of drapery, in the classical taste. More often these side tables, which were invariably fitted with mahogany tops, are found with straight or bow fronts. A fine example of a mahogany side table of this period, after the design of Robert Adam, is shown in Fig. 105. Adam, in his tables, favoured the marble or scagliola rather than the wooden top. These scagliola tops were of composition of Italian invention, which Adam introduced into this country, and were made in various colours decorated with designs, sometimes floral or geometrical and sometimes with heraldic devices. Spurious side tables are often made by the imitator from a type of mahogany side table of the early Victorian period, which generally has a straight front and rounded corners with a plain frieze and heavy turned legs; but by converting the heavy legs into carved and tapered ones, altering the mouldings to the frieze and adding a carved centre plaque in the middle, a fictitious example of a late eighteenth century side table is obtained. These spurious tables, however, are generally much larger and longer than the genuine ones, and the top with the rounded corners will never be found on the late eighteenth century table.

Satinwood side tables of a small size are generally found to-day in pairs, half-circular in shape, and fine examples are either decorated with elaborate inlaid designs, sometimes depicting medallions and musical instruments, or painted similar to the example illustrated, Fig. 103. The

more common type of half-circular side table is either in mahogany or satinwood, the latter being decorated with tulip wood banding; but this type of table is of little value to-day, single examples being especially common.

Dining Tables.—During the last twenty years of this period long dining tables[1] were made like that shown in Fig. 111. Large numbers of this variety of table are found, the ends being semicircular or D-shaped and the middle part composed of three leaves, supported by tapered legs which pull out. Tables of a large size were composed of two centre parts and extra leaves.

Subsequently, as with other furniture, the tapered legs gave place to the turned legs; and contemporary with the latter are the extending tables on tripods, the curved legs of which terminate in cast brass caps with castors, sometimes in the design of a lion's paw, and the edges of the tops are reeded. The collector should be careful to see that the tops of these tables are in their original condition, and that they have not been French polished, particularly if he desires the top not to be easily marked or scratched. The appearance of the undersides of the leaves should also be scrutinised to see that new ones have not been added. The semicircular end tables of these late eighteenth century mahogany dining tables are often converted into satinwood side tables by the imitator, who veneers their tops and friezes with satinwood, and either veneers their legs or replaces them with birch or satinwood ones.

Card Tables.—The design of the card table in this period reverted to the type with the circular top, similar to the Queen Anne walnut card tables, and examples of high quality were made in satinwood or harewood, the former having their tops and friezes decorated with inlay in various coloured woods, and the legs either tapered or turned and fluted. These circular-top card tables are often found to-day in pairs; examples in mahogany are of little value.

Tripod Furniture.—The much-sought-after carved tripod table of the early and middle eighteenth century periods became in this period more

[1] The first long dining table dates back as early as 1740, as examples are extant with cabriole legs ending in club or claw and ball feet. Unlike the late eighteenth century examples, these earlier tables are composed of two or more centre tables with end flaps of a square or oval shape, and not separate end tables as in the late eighteenth century example illustrated.

A satinwood inlaid and painted Commode.
Circa 1775.

Fig. 106. Col. K.

dainty and French in feeling, the feet ending in scroll toes. The Pembroke table took the place of the tripod table at this time, but fire screens on tripod feet still continued to be made, although much lighter and more delicate in design, and to-day are sometimes found in pairs, the screen being generally oval or heart-shaped. About 1800 the legs of these tripod screens became curved, and, in the early nineteenth century, these were again superseded by a triangular platform.

Sofa Tables.—About 1790, a new form of table known as the sofa table was introduced. Early examples are generally in mahogany and, rarely, in satinwood, and have curved legs connected by an arched stretcher. Later examples, of about 1825, are found in rosewood, with heavy legs decorated with coarse carving; these are of considerably less value and interest.

Commodes.—The commode of this period is generally found in satinwood, or satinwood and harewood, of semicircular shape similar to the two fine examples illustrated (Figs. 106 and 107). Besides this type of commode another variety was made of serpentine form, following more closely the lines of the contemporary French article. The commodes of this period were made essentially for the wealthy, and, therefore, most of the existing examples are of the highest quality of workmanship, decorated with inlay of choice woods or with painted decoration. The serpentine-fronted commodes, however, are generally found decorated with inlay and not with painting, and their similarity to the French example is accentuated by the use of chased and gilt metal mounts.

When the imitator comes across plain and undecorated examples of these commodes he will enhance their present-day value by either decorating their surfaces with new inlay or with painting. He seldom makes imitations of entirely new construction, owing to the skill required and the high cost of making the semicircular or serpentine fronts. Generally his imitations have straight fronts with concave corners, thus considerably lessening the cost of production.

Sideboards.—The sideboard was first made about the middle of this period, prior to which a side table, flanked by a pair of pedestals, surmounted by urns, was used in the dining-room. Fine examples of these side tables with urns, designed by Robert Adam, are elaborately inlaid with various

choice woods, and further enhanced by chased and gilt metal mounts. The sideboard was evolved by joining up the pedestals to the side table, and some early sideboards, of about 1775, show the side table in the middle with the pedestals attached to it. This transitional type afterwards developed into the sideboard on legs.

Many spurious copies of the side table with a pair of pedestals and urns have been made, sometimes of new construction, sometimes in the form of plain examples decorated with applied carving in low relief, of swags of drapery, honeysuckle, and pateræ in imitation of a few rare examples of this type, extant to-day, designed by Robert Adam in his early period. When the collector meets with this type of side table and pedestals, elaborately decorated with applied carving, he should remember the great rarity of the original examples. The notes on spurious mahogany carving given in the former chapters will be found of use for detecting these spurious tables and pedestals.

The sideboards that the collector is most likely to meet with are usually called "Sheraton," without any justification, however, as these sideboards were made by all the principal cabinetmakers for about ten years before Thomas Sheraton became known. They are invariably found in mahogany and vary in size from 4 ft. to 9 or 10 ft. in length; a good example of a sideboard of this period is illustrated in Fig. 110. The difference in the design of these sideboards is mainly in the shape of the front. The bow front is the most common, but the rarest examples have a serpentine front. The early sideboards were very seldom made with the straight front, and most of those extant in this shape date from the early part of the nineteenth century and are generally of poor quality. Sideboards of semicircular shape were also made in this period. The serpentine and bow-fronted pieces generally have the tapered legs and spade toes of the late eighteenth century, and some are found with the original brass rail on the back from which a curtain was hung, although large numbers must have been made without this curtain rail attachment. The collector, in purchasing a sideboard, should be guided by the quality of the workmanship and note whether the mahogany veneer used for the top and drawer fronts has a finely marked figure. The best examples have cross-banded edges of tulip wood around the top and drawer fronts, similar to that shown in Fig. 110, and the drawers should be oak lined, denoting that the piece was originally one of good workmanship.

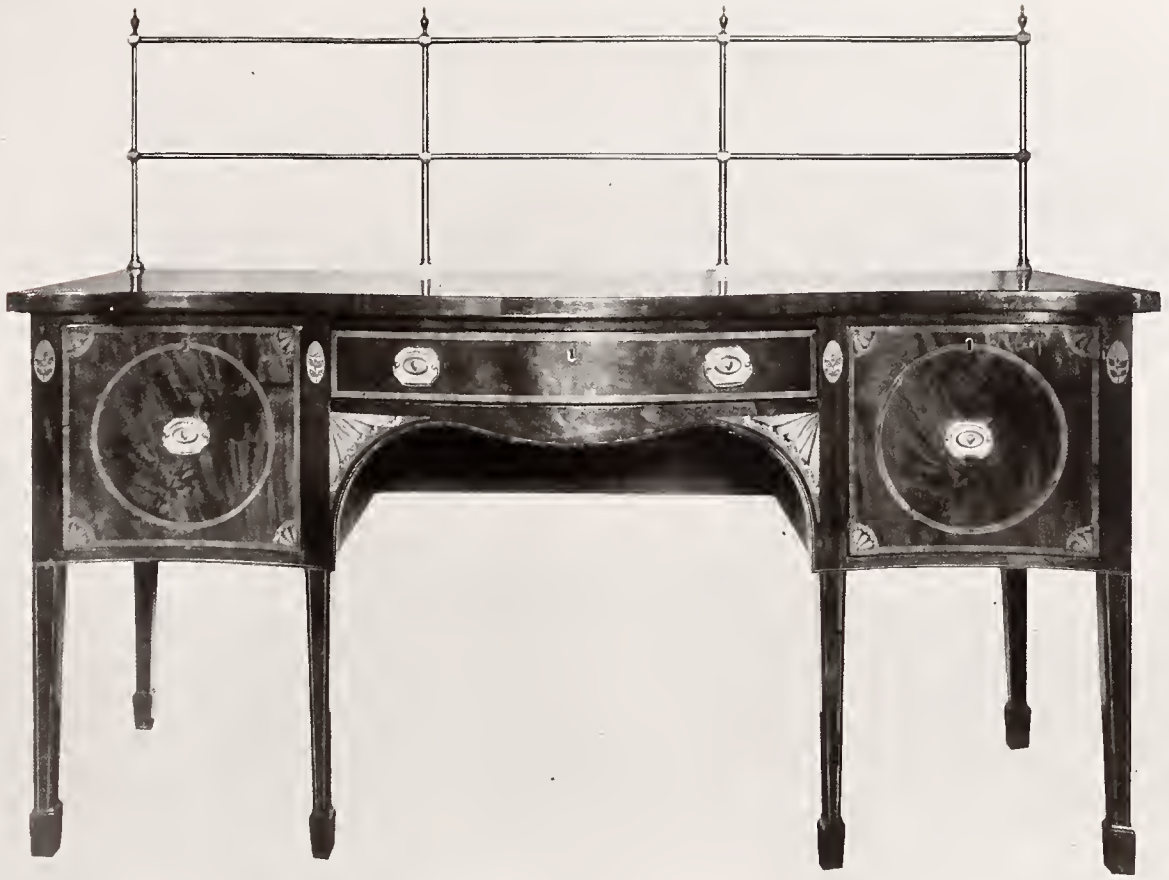
A serpentine front *per se* is considered of greater value than the bow

An inlaid satinwood Dressing Table.
Circa 1800.

Fig. 108. Col. Q.

A half-circular painted and gilt Sidetable, top decorated with painted design on copper.
Circa 1775.

Fig. 109. Col. H.



A mahogany Sideboard, with serpentine front.
Circa 1785.

Fig. 110. Col. G.

A mahogany Dining Table.
Circa 1790.

Fig. 111. Col. U.

front ; but a high quality sideboard of the latter kind is to be preferred to a poorly made piece with a serpentine one. The smaller sideboards, measuring about 4 ft. in width, are more valuable to-day than the larger ones, the reason being that they fulfil to-day the popular demand for dressing tables. The tapered legs of sideboards, in the early part of the nineteenth century, like those of chairs and tables, were superseded by the round turned legs, and sideboards with these legs are accounted to-day less valuable, although, with the exception of the legs, they are similar in all respects to the earlier examples. The imitator, therefore, to make these late sideboards more saleable, cuts off the round legs and fixes tapered ones on to the stumps. In purchasing sideboards, therefore, the collector should examine the legs where they join the carcase to make sure that this substitution has not been carried out.

Bedroom Furniture.—A large quantity of mahogany furniture, such as gentlemen's wardrobes, wing wardrobes, chests-with-drawers, tallboys, bedside cupboards, and toilet glasses are extant to-day, dating from this period. In purchasing this type of furniture the collector should endeavour to buy pieces of good quality and with their original surface condition. The latter attribute, however, is rare, as the majority of this class of furniture, as already stated, has had its patina destroyed by the French polisher.

Satinwood was not often used for bedroom furniture, and particularly rarely for large pieces, such as wardrobes. A quantity of bedroom furniture, however, was made of softwood, generally painted with a cream ground, with enrichments and mouldings picked out in another colour. A bedroom suite of this description, to be seen at the Victoria and Albert Museum, was made for David Garrick by Chippendale & Haig, and is authenticated by the original invoice preserved with it. Although a large quantity of this type of painted furniture, generally of beech, must have been made originally, examples are not often met with to-day, as, owing to its being made of softwood and painted, a great quantity has not survived the wear and tear of one hundred and forty years.

Dressing tables made in mahogany, with folding top, enclosing a mirror and small boxes and compartments for toilet necessaries, were also made in this period ; and fine quality chests-with-drawers are also found with the top drawer fitted in a similar manner, these chests generally having serpentine fronts and were made in mahogany, although some examples are met with in harewood.

The cheval glass was first introduced in the late eighteenth century. The earlier specimens of about 1785 are the most desirable, having mahogany square supports to the sides and a glass that can be raised and lowered as well as tilted. These early cheval glasses are small; but as time went on they became larger, the side supports being turned instead of square, until, about 1820 to 1830, the design became very ugly and cumbersome. Rare early examples have carved urns as finials to the side supports, and the cross rails are ornamented with carving. The original mirror plate was always bevelled.

CHAPTER XI

IRISH FURNITURE

FROM the point of view of the collector of English furniture, a knowledge of Irish furniture is of importance, in that it will prevent him from purchasing pieces of Irish origin in the belief that they are English. He should, therefore, make himself familiar with the peculiarities of Irish design, so that the recognition of examples will be easy.

Furniture distinctively classed as "Irish" would appear to date from 1725 to 1755, and from its design it would seem to be the work of craftsmen who were combining the design of contemporary English furniture with certain native characteristics. In their furniture of about 1735 they appear to have copied the design of English furniture of about 1725; in fact, it may be said that the Irish furniture of this period is a decade later in design than the English.[1] It is the heavy appearance, superfluity of carved ornament, and absence of elegant and graceful lines that make its present-day appreciation and value considerably less than that of the contemporary English furniture.

The following remarks describing a few characteristics of Irish furniture will be found of use to the collector for the recognition of Irish examples:

1. This early furniture was made of Spanish or San Domingo mahogany and is very dark in colour, sometimes approaching to a black tone.

2. The carving is in low relief and its background is often decorated with an incised diamond pattern (Fig. 113), or sometimes with a punched design (Fig. 116).

3. The cabriole legs usually terminate with a square paw foot (Fig. 112), which is often found with a kind of decorated hock just above the paw (Fig. 112). If the cabriole leg is terminated with a claw and ball foot the claw will invariably be webbed (Fig. 116).

4. The cabriole legs of chairs, stools, stands, and side tables will invariably be connected by a deep apron piece under the frieze (Figs. 113, 114, and 115).

[1] The Irish table (Fig. 113) has a combination of the lion paw foot and the mask head found on English tables of about 1730, and the rococo scrolls on the apron characteristic of English design of about 1745.

5. Side tables will always have tops of mahogany with plain moulded edges (Fig. 113), and seldom of marble like the contemporary English tables.

6. One of the favourite motifs of ornament is the escallop shell (Fig. 116), undoubtedly adapted from the shell so often found on English furniture of the early eighteenth century.

7. Other favourite motifs of ornament are the satyr or grotesque masks, which will be found on pieces of high quality.

8. Cabinets, linen chests, bureaux, and wardrobes are often found mounted on stands with cabriole legs.

9. The articles that are extant to-day in the greatest number are side tables with cabriole legs, and linen chests on stands.

10. Chairs are often found with their backs and seat rails of oak, overlaid with mahogany veneer, and chairs with cabriole legs were often designed with stretchers.

All the above characteristics are peculiar to Irish furniture from about 1725 to 1755.[1] After this date the furniture of England and Ireland became more standardised as the Irish cabinetmakers were influenced by the trade catalogues of English cabinetmakers, such as Thomas Chippendale, although the Irish craftsmen still favoured native features of design and certain articles of furniture. Satinwood and painted beech furniture appear to have been specially popular in Ireland in the late eighteenth century.

The amount of Irish furniture of fine quality that survived from the Oak and Walnut periods is so negligible that it demands no consideration from the collector. This was, doubtless, due to the fact that Ireland was in a very troubled and unsettled state, and governed solely by military occupation. There was, therefore, no resident nobility to encourage a native industry in furniture for the decoration and equipment of their houses. It was not until the first half of the eighteenth century that the country became more settled, and not until the end of it, when the independence of the Irish Parliament was established, that the presence of legislators in Dublin led to social conditions conducive to the growth of the applied and domestic arts.

[1] This early Irish mahogany furniture is often called "Irish Chippendale," presumably because it has the cabriole leg and claw and ball foot which, in English furniture, is similarly wrongly attributed to the design and influence of Thomas Chippendale.

An Irish mahogany Card Table, with typical paw foot.
Circa 1740.

Fig. 112. Col. J.

An Irish mahogany Sidetable, showing typical diamond pattern design to background of carving.
Circa 1755.

Fig. 113. Col. H.

An Irish mahogany Stool, with typical carved apron piece.
Circa 1745.

Fig. 114. Col. C.

An Irish mahogany Tripod Table. (The circular top is of a later period.)
Circa 1745.

Fig. 115. Col. C.

An Irish mahogany Cellaret, with typical webbed claw and ball foot.
Circa 1750.

Fig. 116. Col. C.

CHAPTER XII

CONTINENTAL FURNITURE COMPARED TO ENGLISH

FREQUENT mention has been made of the way English furniture design was influenced by that of other nations, and this in many cases has naturally resulted in a strong resemblance between English and Continental furniture. Where this resemblance is of importance is that the collector may mistake pieces of foreign origin for English, and this, like the purchase of Irish furniture, would result in most cases in his paying greatly in excess of their real value, as most Continental pieces, with the exception of the French, are in no way as valuable as English.

The above remarks are made not to discourage the purchase of Continental furniture, but to act as a warning to the collector that a certain knowledge of the design and workmanship of furniture of foreign origin is necessary should he wish to avoid making mistakes. The Dutch furniture is the most important in this respect, as not only does it bear a stronger resemblance to the English than that of other countries, but there is a large quantity of it in England, as within recent years it has been imported to supply the demand for old English furniture.

The Dutch examples that may be bought by the uninitiated in mistake for English will be found in oak, walnut, marquetry, mahogany, and satinwood. The chief article in oak is the drawer-top table with bulbous legs; the Dutch example, however, in comparison with the English, is smaller and shorter and the bulbous legs are melon-shaped and narrow-necked; they are generally found quite plain, with no carved decoration.

The Dutch marquetry furniture, which generally takes the form of wardrobes, bureaux, and chairs, exists in England in large quantities; the marquetry is very coarsely executed, invariably of a design of flowers and birds into which ivory inlay is often introduced. Marquetry chairs, sometimes with carved crestings to the backs, are entirely decorated with inlay on the back, seat-rail, and front legs. English marquetry chairs of this description were never made, as the inlay was confined to small panels on the

splats and the knees of the legs. The Dutch marquetry centre table has already been mentioned in Chapter IV.

Dutch furniture in mahogany is also frequently met with, and the large wardrobe, similar in form to the gentleman's wardrobe of the late eighteenth century, has often been mistaken by the unwary for a piece of "Chippendale." Its dimensions, however, are generally much larger, and the panels in the doors of the upper part are invariably decorated with carved ribbons, urns, and swags, also medallions with cameo heads. The corners of bureaux, wardrobes, and cabinets are usually canted, and sometimes decorated by columns with Corinthian caps in brass ; and these pieces are frequently surmounted by a broken pediment centred by a large carved urn, decorated with bay or laurel leaves. The lower part is often shaped with a swelled or bombe front.

In satinwood furniture there are a large number of bureaux and chests-with-drawers ; also a type of cupboard, with drawer above, on short tapered legs ; and the secretaire with let-down front. A favourite motif of decoration for these satinwood pieces is a large inlaid shell, similar to the inlaid shell found on late eighteenth century examples. In this satinwood furniture the dentil, which was another favourite motif of decoration, was often inlaid, and is not only found on the cornices of tall articles such as cabinets and wardrobes, but also under the edge of the top of low pieces such as the cupboard described above.

This mahogany and satinwood furniture is of high quality workmanship, veneered respectively with fine-figured mahogany and East Indian satinwood ; the drawers are generally oak lined, but differ in one respect from the English drawers, as their sides will be found nailed to the backs instead of dovetailed. The doors will not have hinges, but will be hung on pivots. These pivot-hung doors are never found on English examples in mahogany and satinwood, but doors of English walnut pieces are sometimes found hung in this manner. This denotes Dutch workmanship, which is accounted for by the large number of craftsmen from Holland working in England at this period.

Besides this Dutch furniture, a small quantity of Portuguese furniture, mostly chairs and settees, which have cabriole legs and claw and ball feet, is to be met with in England ; examples of this, however, are of very poor quality, decorated with coarsely executed carving, and are cramped and stilted in form. They bear a closer resemblance to the Irish furniture of this type than to the English.

CHRONOLOGICAL SURVEY

1453. Capture of Constantinople by the Turks and flight of the Greeks to Italy.
1485. Accession of Henry VII.
1496. Magna Intercursus—Free Trade treaty with the Netherlands.
1509. Accession of Henry VIII.
1538. Larger Monasteries suppressed: workmen of Ecclesiastical Building Guilds took up secular work.
1547. Accession of Edward VI.
1553. Accession of Mary.
1558. Accession of Elizabeth.
1570. John Thorpe, Earliest Renaissance Architect, commenced building of Kirby Hall, Northants.
1572. Massacre of St. Bartholomew and flight of Huguenots from France.
1573. Inigo Jones, Architect, born.
1580. Collection of designs for furniture, gardens, fountains, etc., published by Hans Vredeman de Vries.
1581. The Turkey Company received a Charter for trading in the Levant.
1598. Edict of Nantes, securing liberty and property to the Huguenots.
1600. The East India Company received its Charter.
1603. Accession of James I.
1625. Accession of Charles I.
1632. Sir Christopher Wren, Architect, born.
1648. Grinling Gibbons, Carver, born in Holland.
1649. Charles I. executed and Commonwealth established.
1651. Inigo Jones, Architect, died.
1660. Accession of Charles II.
BEGINNING OF DUTCH AND FRENCH INFLUENCE. WALNUT CHAIRS, DAY-BEDS, AND STOOLS CAME INTO FASHION.
1675. VENEERED WALNUT AND MARQUETRY FURNITURE CAME INTO FASHION.
LACQUERED FURNITURE CAME INTO FASHION.
1684. William Kent, Architect and Designer, born.
1685. Revocation of Edict of Nantes and emigration of Huguenot workmen to Holland and England.
Accession of James II.
1688. *Treatise on Japanning and Varnishing*, by Stalker and Parker, published.
1689. Accession of William III. and Mary.
1695. GILT GESSO FURNITURE CAME INTO FASHION.

1696. Batty Langley, Architect and Designer, born.
1702. Accession of Queen Anne.
1714. Accession of George I.
1717. Thomas Chippendale, Cabinetmaker, born.
1720. MAHOGANY FURNITURE BEGAN TO BE MADE.
1721. Grinling Gibbons, Carver, died.
1723. Sir Christopher Wren, Architect, died.
1726. Sir William Chambers, Architect, born.
1727. Accession of George II.
1728. Robert Adam, Architect and Designer, born.
1730. DESIGN OF FURNITURE INFLUENCED BY CLASSICAL REVIVAL OF WILLIAM KENT AND OTHER ARCHITECT-DESIGNERS.
1733. Repeal of duty on imported timber.
1736. *Practical Architecture*, by William Halfpenny, published.
1739. *Gentlemen's or Builders' Companion*, by William Jones, published, containing designs for pier glasses, slab tables, chimney-pieces, etc.
Treasury of Designs, by Batty and Thomas Langley, published.
1741. Angelica Kauffmann born in Italy.
1743. DESIGN OF FURNITURE INFLUENCED BY FRENCH TASTE.
1745. DESIGN OF FURNITURE INFLUENCED BY THE CHINESE AND GOTHIC TASTES.
1748. William Kent, Architect and Designer, died.
1751. Thomas Sheraton, Designer, born.
1752. *The Country Gentlemen's Pocket Companion and Builders' Assistant for Decorative Architecture*, by William and John Halfpenny, published. Contained designs in Chinese and Gothic tastes.
1754. New Book of Chinese designs by Edwards and Darby, published.
The Gentlemen's and Cabinetmakers' Director, by Thomas Chippendale, published. Second edition, 1759, and third and enlarged edition, 1764.
1757. Book of Chinese designs by Sir William Chambers, published.
1758. Robert Adam commenced practice as an Architect in London, in partnership with his brother James Adam.
Book of designs for picture frames, candelabra, etc., by Thomas Johnson, Carver, published. Second edition with 150 new designs published, 1761.
1760. Accession of George III.
1762. *Universal System of Household Furniture*, by Ince and Mayhew, published.
1765. DESIGN OF FURNITURE INFLUENCED BY THE CLASSICAL REVIVAL OF ROBERT AND JAMES ADAM. SATINWOOD INTRODUCED FOR FURNITURE-MAKING.
The Cabinet and Chairmakers' Real Friend and Companion, by Robert Manwaring, published.
Angelica Kauffmann came to England.
1768. Book of furniture designs by Lock and Copeland, published.

1769. Thomas Chippendale entered into partnership, the style of the firm being given on invoices as Chippendale & Haig, and also as Chippendale, Haig, & Co.
New Book of pier frames, girandoles, tables, etc., by Mathias Lock, published.
1772. Robert Gillow, Cabinetmaker, of Oxford Street, London, died.
1778. First complete portfolio of Architectural designs, by R. and J. Adam, published. These had been published in folios since 1773. A second portfolio was published in 1779, and a third in 1822.
1779. Thomas Chippendale, Cabinetmaker, died.
1781. Cipriani, one of the Artists assisting R. and J. Adam, died.
Angelica Kauffmann, R.A., married Antonio Zucchi, another assistant of R. and J. Adam, and returned to Italy.
1786. George Hepplewhite, Cabinetmaker, died.
1788. *Cabinetmakers' and Upholsterers' Guide*, by A. Hepplewhite & Co., published.
Designs of Household Furniture, by T. Shearer, published.
1790. Thomas Sheraton, Furniture Designer and Teacher of Drawing, came to London.
1791. *Cabinetmakers' and Upholsterers' Drawing-Book*, by Thomas Sheraton, commenced serial publication ; completed in 1794.
1792. Robert Adam, Architect and Designer, died and was buried in Westminster Abbey.
1794. James Adam, Architect and Designer, died.
1803. *The Cabinet Directory*, by Thomas Sheraton, published.
1806. Thomas Sheraton, Furniture Designer, died.
1807. *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* (Empire style), by Thomas Hope, published.

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